

# FOUNDATION FOCUS

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE FOUNDATION NEWS

WINTER | 2021

## Powerful Expressions

*HOW ONE D.C. ARTIST AND MC ALUMNA HELPED US PAUSE, PAY OUR RESPECTS TO COVID-19 VICTIMS* [P.12](#)

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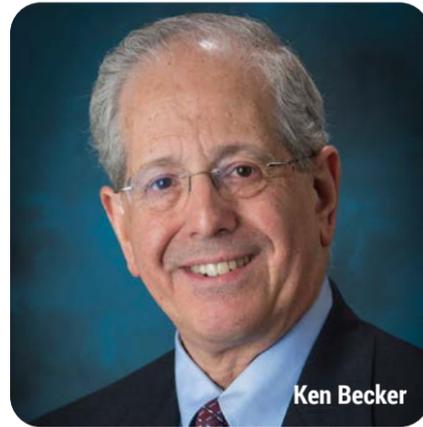
# FROM THE CHAIR

**Welcome 2021!** I know we must all be relieved to be past a terribly difficult and heart-breaking year, as we hope and wish for brighter times ahead. But these strange and challenging times have, in some ways, created a lifestyle reset that may also ease our way forward.

Virtual learning and communication is, to a large extent, here to stay. Even though we yearn for physical connection, we have all learned how to do the virtual thing and without a doubt see the benefits to less traffic! And, many of us have been awakened to a quieter pace of life, having more time to talk to neighbors—from a distance, more time with family members, and opportunities to have witnessed many acts of kindness extended by so many.

We are immensely proud of how the College and the Foundation quickly addressed students' needs during this crisis, from getting them access to WiFi to emergency funding for essentials like food and rent. Looking back, we realized there was a small group of individuals who were—quite literally—working around-the-clock to ensure the plans for student assistance went from idea into action.

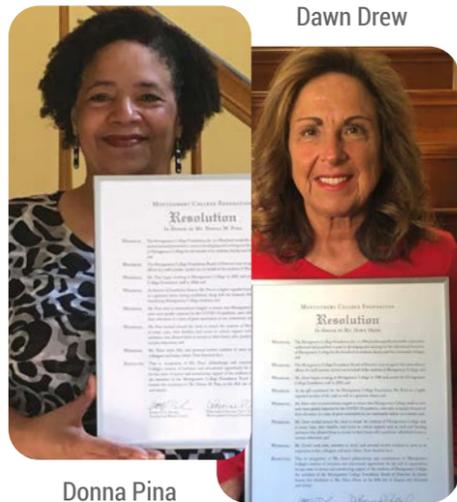
Donna Pina, director of foundation finance, and Dawn Drew, gift coordinator, were two of those people. For weeks on



Ken Becker

end, they worked from morning to night to answer the emails that came pouring in from students. In recognition of their extraordinary efforts, the Foundation presented them with a resolution, an honor reserved for only those who go above and beyond in support of our mission. The resolution recognized their work, as well as their personal philanthropy, as both have personally invested in students by establishing scholarships that they continue to support.

The Montgomery College Foundation, and Montgomery College, are blessed to have many dedicated and passionate employees ready to work well above normal expectations, while also contributing to the very scholarships their work allows them to provide. This speaks volumes about the work we do at the College and the Foundation, but it speaks even more about these two extraordinary individuals. Their integrity, hard work, and commitment to the well-being of others are lessons from the pandemic that we will always remember.



Dawn Drew

Donna Pina

## FOUNDATION FOCUS

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The Montgomery College Foundation is a 501c(3) charitable organization governed by business, alumni, and community leaders to enhance the work of Montgomery College to a level of excellence comparable to the finest colleges and universities across the country. Through advocacy, influence, and financial support, these volunteer leaders work to ensure understanding of and commitment to the community college philosophy of opportunity, inclusion, and education achievement for all.

Cover photography by Jonathan Thorpe.

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Public Health Sciences Major, *Montgomery College*



Long Nguyen and Kimmy Duong  
Student Services Center

## New Building Honors Donors Who Embrace Diversity and Inclusion

By David Frey

At the virtual building dedication last October, student Lucy Kuchma sang “A Million Dreams,” as a drone sailed through the new Long Nguyen and Kimmy Duong Student Services Center at the Rockville Campus. Song lyrics of traveling “through the dark...” to a place that “feels like home,” were emblematic of the personal journey made by the new building’s namesakes.

The 127,000-square-foot center was named in honor of Duong and Nguyen for a gift to support student scholarships from the Kimmy Duong Foundation, which Duong established to support higher education and other social causes. Duong, who immigrated from Vietnam with only \$40 and a few personal possessions, credits education with her success—and she is dedicated to helping

Montgomery College students achieve their goals and hoping they, too, will “pay it forward.”

“It is my sincere hope that these students will one day do the same for others,” Duong said at the building dedication.

The Long Nguyen and Kimmy Duong Student Services Center allows students to find an array of support services under



Long Nguyen and Kimmy Duong

one roof, in a beautiful five-story building with a bright lobby with floor-to-ceiling windows offering a view onto the campus.

“This amazing new resource for students will be the one-stop shop for every kind of support they will need as they pursue their higher education goals,” said Dr. Kim Kelley, vice president and provost of the Rockville Campus.

The state-of-the-art center houses more than 20 College departments, including Raptor Central. Formerly known as the Welcome Center, Raptor Central offers students a single destination for admissions, enrollment, and visitor services—services that used to require students to make trips to four or five different buildings. The center also offers spaces for students to gather and study, and visitors can grab a cup of coffee or a snack at the student-run MBI Café.

“The Long Nguyen and Kimmy Duong Student Services Center will be the heart of the campus,” said Dr. Monica Brown, senior vice president for student affairs. “Students will find labs and lounges—the place to share ideas, work on assignments, study, and sometimes rest and rejuvenate.”

“To the Vietnamese students at Montgomery College, I hope that seeing my husband’s and my name on this building will remind you that anything is possible,” Duong said. “I encourage you—just as I encourage all Montgomery College students—to work hard in order to fulfill your potential. I also encourage you to do your part to build the world in which you want to live and give back to society.”

## Long Nguyen and Kimmy Duong Student Services Center Building Features and Services

- Financial Aid Office
- Records and Registration
- Cashier
- Scholarship and Grants Office
- Counseling and Advising
- Disability Support Services
- Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES)
- Multicultural Students Center
- Student Health and Wellness Center
- Recruitment
- Combat2College
- Student Life



To see more photos and view the virtual dedication celebration, held October 28, 2020, visit [montgomerycollege.edu/events/student-services-center-dedication/index.html](https://montgomerycollege.edu/events/student-services-center-dedication/index.html)

“

*I close my eyes  
and I can see  
The world that’s  
waiting up for me  
That I call my own*

*Through the dark,  
through the door  
Through where  
no one’s been before  
But it feels like home. ...”*

—EXCERPT, “A MILLION DREAMS” FROM  
THE GREATEST SHOWMAN SOUNDTRACK

## A DECADE OF DIFFERENCE Celebrating MC President's Anniversary

**"This woman has led  
[MC] to its highest level."**

—Sheila Johnson, managing partner, Washington Mystics and CEO Salamander Hotels and Resorts



On September 10, 2020, Montgomery College celebrated **Dr. DeRionne Pollard's** 10 years of leadership. The livestream event, hosted by Dr. Scott Royal, CEO and president of Westat, included a retrospective of Dr. Pollard's successes from 2010 to 2020. It also offered a glimpse of the College's future, which includes the new Presidential Scholars program, a strategic move to uplift underrepresented students.

"Montgomery College has come a long way under her leadership," says Royal in his remarks, a statement underscored repeatedly by guests who participated in the virtual event.

Back in 2010, Universities at Shady Grove Executive Director Stewart Edelstein was on the search committee that recommended her hiring. "We were lucky to get her," he says. "We are lucky to still have her. She wants to make a difference."

Pollard's leadership, her kindness, and her commitment to inclusivity at all levels of College operations were lauded by Montgomery County and higher education leaders. They cited,

too, the positive influence she has had on Montgomery County. Under her direction, the College initiated—and strengthened—several programs for students that bolster support throughout their experience, beginning at the high school level. Her motto has been "radical inclusion." UMBC President Freeman Hrabowski says: "To see her over a 10-year period make such a difference in our state... as an education leader... as a thought leader—No one is more valued than Dr. Pollard."

Congratulations, Dr. Pollard, on this milestone!

### Milestone Achievements 2010–2020

Middle States reaccreditation | 2020 Campaign/\$30 million | Increasing student access by fundraising | Champion of radical inclusion | Enrollment of DACA, DREAMers, and refugees | Revamp of developmental education | Achieving the Promise Academy | ACES | Established PIC MC | Community partnerships  
Creation of the Innovation Fund | Presidential Scholars program

## Foundation Welcomes Senior Campaign Director

**Craig Eozzo**, the foundation's new senior campaign director, will apply his expertise in major gifts, planned giving, and corporate relations to benefit the students of Montgomery College. Eozzo will help lead the team of talented fundraisers who just completed the foundation's largest fundraising campaign in its history, closing at \$31 million.

Prior to joining the foundation, Eozzo was the director of planned giving and major gifts at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City. There, he was responsible for revitalizing the planned giving society with commitments upwards of \$28 million. He previously held the role of director of planned giving and major gifts at NYU's Stern School of business, where he raised more than \$50 million in scholarships and programmatic support.

"Craig is an accomplished fundraiser with the passion and skills to meet the financial goals that are so critical to supporting student success," says Joyce Matthews, vice president of development and executive director of the foundation. "I know he will help us engage many more individual and institutional partners with the College."



COURTESY CRAIG EOZZO

## She Served Her Country Now She Will Serve the Community

**Jessica McBride '20** served six years in the Air Force Reserve as a medic. At a time when the nation is still gripped by the COVID-19 pandemic, she will answer the call to serve the community as a nurse in a local ICU or emergency room. McBride, 34 years old, graduated from the MC nursing program in December 2020.

"Nursing in both the ICU and the ER," she says, "you really use your critical knowledge and take care of the patient in the way they deserve." McBride views the role of intensive care nurse as a detective, which has long appealed to her inner-Sherlock Holmes. "When a patient's blood pressure goes up, you look for the possible reasons, like a detective following clues. You also have to be proactive—I like to have a plan in place—so you try to anticipate scenarios and be ready to react."

During her military career, McBride earned an EMT license, and worked as a medical technician on base and/or at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center. She worked with active duty men and women and wounded veterans. She also married, became a mom, and moved to Maryland.

McBride enrolled in the MC nursing program in January 2019 and attended full time, which was made possible by Montgomery College Foundation scholarship support and support from her family. "The scholarships I received are a big reason I was able to put the kind of time I did into my schoolwork."

In addition to the 50-plus hours she put in each week to coursework—assignments, lectures, virtual simulation, and studying—she also joined the Nursing Club, the Student Success Committee,

and Pinning Ceremony (nursing graduation) Committee.

McBride also credits support from within the Nursing Department for her success. "At MC, you have professors who really care about your well-being. Professors Mutlu and Robinson, and so many others, were incredibly supportive," she says.

**To support nursing students and others in the health sciences programs at Montgomery College, visit [montgomerycollege.edu/onlinegiving](https://montgomerycollege.edu/onlinegiving).**



COURTESY JESSICA MCBRIDE



LISA LUSHER

## #MCPROUD #MCSTRONG #MCRESILIENT

**Before 2020 officially ended**, *Foundation Focus* asked the MC community to tell us something good about their academic year during the pandemic. As expected, they responded with enthusiastic shout-outs to their coworkers, students, donors, and community members. These are just a few highlights from the outpouring of messages received.

## STUDENT-SENIOR CONNECTIONS

When senior centers in Montgomery County had to close their doors to community volunteers last spring (due to COVID-19), a group of MC students and seniors living at the Charles E. Smith Life Communities formed a new virtual program, Creative Connections. Starting in June 2020, the program provided meaningful social connections for both seniors and students in isolation by bringing them together virtually. They met in weekly, collaborative art-making projects, with a final exhibit showcasing their work. Students contributed more than 700 volunteer hours to the program, which plans to continue in spring 2021.

—**Nik Sushka, Service-Learning Coordinator, Rockville Campus Student Life**

*"It's wonderful to work with younger people, with their young ideas and their fresh approach to life."*

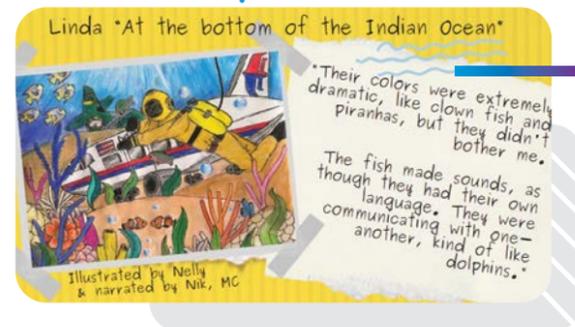
—**Thelma, senior resident**

*"Best experience ever! Creative Connections has created a safe space where I can be comfortable while helping others."*

—**Georgi, MC student volunteer**

*"It was a bright light in my week every week to see what they had done with each assignment!"*

—**Audrey, senior resident**



Above: Projects completed by students and seniors who live in the Charles E. Smith Life Communities in N. Bethesda, Maryland.



*"USMC Veteran and current National Guard Service Member Tory Andler showed tremendous resilience throughout the pandemic. Tory was mobilized at the beginning of the pandemic as part of Maryland's response to COVID-19. During his active-duty time, he responded to nursing homes, worked on setting up a field hospital at the Baltimore Convention Center, worked at the COVID testing center at Pimlico, delivered food to communities in inner-city Baltimore, and provided PPE and temperature checks for state employees, all while maintaining his full-time student enrollment."*

—**Joanna Starling, program coordinator, Combat2College**

## ...And Thank Yous by the Score

### Dr. Benita Rashaw and the Student Health and Wellness (SHaW) Center

*"Throughout this pandemic they have had phenomenal programs."*

### Mobile Markets

*"They kept students and community members fed."*

### Boys to Men Program Mentors

*"BTM mentees received assistance applying for scholarships from the MC Foundation and community resources. Many applied and won!"*

### Learning Center Staff

*"They moved tutoring services online seamlessly."*

### Student Senates (all three campuses)

*"The Student Senate continues to amaze the Office of Student Life team by the way they think of their peer's needs... and they work to ensure new and returning students stay connected to the College even though they are not able to be on campus."*

### Public Safety and Campus Facilities Teams

*"They have kept the home fires burning... Public Safety has been agile and accommodating in ensuring approved access to buildings/offices are honored—with a masked smile."*

### STEM Faculty, Lab Managers, and Coordinators

*"They have done extraordinary work to create virtual labs. They have tapped into worldwide efforts, online resources, and created their own, making videos and demonstrating lab techniques and data analysis."*

### IT Staff

*"Chris Cusic and the entire IT team deserve medals for their almost 24/7 service ... IT Service Desk staff have provided simply grand service as we have all had to be 'up and running' 24/7."*

### Student Life

*"There are not enough superlatives."*

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# A Year of Reflection



Joyce Matthews

At a meeting last March, I told my team we would be working from home “for the next two weeks” and to make sure they had adequate supplies. Now, almost a year later, we are still home. And, although there are days when it feels like the walls are closing in, we—along with our students—have learned to make it work. More than that, we have seen a year of remarkable community spirit, compassion, and creative workarounds by our college community.

Here are some examples:

- Dr. Pollard and the College leadership team communicated early, often, and calmly to guide us through the turbulence. And they continue to identify individual and institutional actions to ensure we continue moving forward.
- We ensured that student employees continued to be paid during the first weeks of remote work, regardless of their assignments or ability to work during this period.
- The College instituted a “Talent Share” program allowing employees with fewer responsibilities in their assigned remote roles to take on new roles in other departments.
- Since March 2020, 179 faculty, staff, and retirees donated more than \$46,000 in emergency assistance.
- Members of our board of directors donated food, Target gift cards, laptops, payments on utilities, rent, and car insurance. One director provided a student who was a domestic violence survivor with secure housing.

When I look back over the year, I could not be prouder to be part of this community. Quite simply, Montgomery College has remained a reflection of the world in which I want to live.

Meister Eckhart, a German theologian and philosopher, once said, “If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough.” With this in mind, I want to say thank you to Montgomery College for serving as a source of strength for all of us, to the Montgomery community for the steadfast support you give our students, and to everyone reading these comments who may be moved to use your time, talent, and treasure to make this world a better place.

“Quite simply, Montgomery College has remained a reflection of the world in which I want to live.”

## FY 2020 Gifts and Pledges

**\$5,913,334**

Total gifts and pledges received from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020

**17.6% Friends of the Foundation**  
Marsha and Les Levine, Montgomery College trustee, were among 562 friends of the foundation who made gifts totaling **\$1,040,915**.

**52.7% Foundations, Organizations**  
Don Dawn, president of the Gordon and Marilyn Macklin Foundation, represents one of 58 foundations and organizations that provided gifts and support totaling **\$3,113,664**.

**3.5% Alumni** Stan Jones '77/'85 and 514 alumni made gifts totaling **\$208,438**.

**6% Employees and Retirees**  
Dr. Louise T. Crissman, former adjunct professor, and 312 other employees and retirees pledged or contributed gifts totaling **\$356,654**.

**13.2% Corporations**  
Pepco, An Exelon Company, and 84 other corporations provided gifts and support totaling **\$777,774**.

**7% Individual Donor-Advised Funds**  
Darren and Mary Pat Alcus, foundation officer and treasurer, recommended one of 56 gifts contributed through donor-advised funds totaling **\$415,889**.



## How Your Gifts Transformed Lives

*As a veteran of the United States Army, I thank you for your support. They tell veterans as they leave service, the difficulties we will face upon receiving our DD-214. Thankfully there are people like yourself who support veterans in their transition into civilian life.*

—Marlon Benavides, studio art

*Although I am not the first person in my family to attend college, I plan on being the first to graduate. I'm thankful for the people in my life that encouraged me and expressed their belief in my academic abilities. Since starting the nursing program, I have been challenged in prioritizing my busy life as a working mother and student. Reducing my hours at work has forced me to budget and sacrifice even necessities to make time for school, study, and assignments. There was even a time when I questioned if the sacrifices I was making*

*to go back to school would be worth it. The more immersed I become in the field when listening to my instructors and meeting patients when on clinical rotations, I know I am making the right decision.*

—Charnae Mason, nursing

*My freshman year of college was a rollercoaster ride. I am beyond thankful to you for giving me an opportunity to achieve my dreams. Finding scholarships that accept dreamers is rare. I migrated to America with my family. My family is from El Salvador. I grew up in Maryland and was not aware that being a dreamer would take such a toll on my education. Until high school, I saw my peers and I as equal. It was at this time that I discovered the obstacles and delicacy of my situation. MC was the best option for my circumstances. Small classes result in better focus. I would like to find a career that gives*

*me the power to help those without a voice. The opportunity to attend college with no worry about debt has been a dream.*

—Silvia Hernandez Conde, general studies

*In 2018, I was able to return to school to pursue a degree in electrical engineering, a dream I have always had since I was young. Every semester is harder than the last one, but I can truly say that I am enjoying every milestone of my academic journey. I go into school every morning with a sense of gratitude that I have the privilege to attend school again. Receiving a scholarship from you has inspired me to give back to the community. I also feel a surplus of motivation to succeed in school now because there is a [donor] who believes in me. I will absolutely put this award to good use and excel in all my classes.*

—Lauren Asselta, electrical engineering

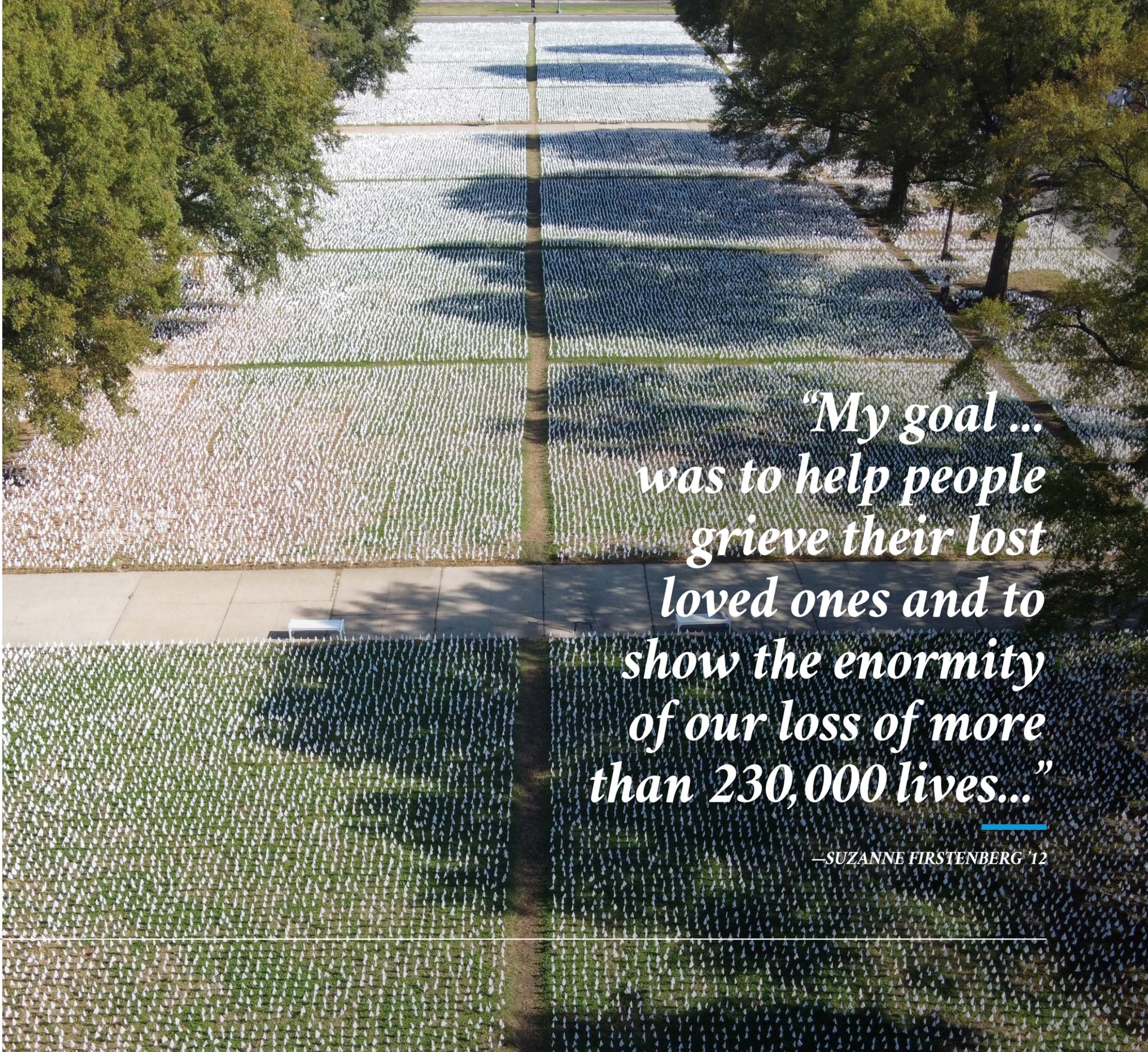
# Powerful Expressions

HOW ONE D.C. ARTIST AND MC ALUMNA HELPED US PAUSE, PAY OUR RESPECTS TO COVID-19 VICTIMS

By Diane Bosser  
Photography by Jonathan Thorpe

When the U.S. COVID-19 death toll began to escalate, Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg '12 grew angry about what she calls the greatest mass casualty event of our lifetime. Her 25 years as a Hospice volunteer taught her that death is much more personal than a statistic. Week after week during the pandemic, the mortality rate swelled with little or no opportunity to collectively mourn the dead. Her anger grew.

Firstenberg's art installation, *In America How Could This Happen?*, was a temporary exhibition dedicated to the number of COVID-19 deaths in the United States in 2020.



*“My goal... was to help people grieve their lost loved ones and to show the enormity of our loss of more than 230,000 lives...”*

—SUZANNE FIRSTENBERG '12



*“I’ve been overwhelmed at the outpouring of emotion this has wrought. ... People are craving public acknowledgement of their loved one’s passing.”*

“These [COVID] deaths have largely happened in silence, often without loved ones there. And there have been no public funerals, or very few. Let’s face it,” says Firstenberg, “who wants to do a Zoom funeral? It’s just not the same.”

In response, Firstenberg put together the public art installation, *In America How Could This Happen?*, a temporary exhibition located at the D.C. Armory Drill Field, near RFK Stadium in Southeast. Her idea was to plant a small white

flag in the ground for every COVID-19 death in the United States.

and to show both the enormity of our loss of more than 230,000 lives,” she says, “and to show respect for the loss of each individual life.” For three days in October, Firstenberg and volunteers planted 165,000 flags (a then-current death toll) across the armory’s 80,000 square feet. Ruppert Landscaping, a Laytonsville, Maryland-based firm, donated 400 man-hours in design and installation, including helping to determine density and placement of interior walkways.

“We used plywood sheets with holes spaced eight inches on center to create a template. We planted flags in each hole, then shimmed the plank up over the flags. We had 30 to 40 of these templates, and it took us three days to do it,” she says.

The installation opened to the public on October 23. Visitors were able to personalize flags in memory of loved ones. By Thanksgiving, the installation totaled more than 240,000. Reminiscent of Arlington Cemetery, the visual

effect of row upon row of flags visually blended to form a rippling white burial shroud over the grass.

“I’ve been overwhelmed at the outpouring of emotion this has wrought,” says Firstenberg. “I did not anticipate how important it would be to each individual family. People are craving public acknowledgement of their loved one’s passing.”

The installation closed on November 30, but not before Firstenberg and her husband, Doug (MC Foundation board member emeritus), were recognized by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Washington D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, and celebrity chef Jose Andrés at an event

there on November 2. Firstenberg was unsure what the next iteration of the installation would be—but not of the continued need for such a memorial, since the COVID-19 virus continues to take American lives.

#### **FIRSTENBERG’S SECOND ACT**

Visual artist **Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg** ’12 first enrolled at Montgomery College at age 50, after accidentally discovering an aptitude for clay sculpture during a parent night ceramics workshop. She took drawing, sculpting, woodworking, welding, and painting courses.

“I was driven to learn all I could about art.”

Professor Lincoln Mudd (deceased December 2018) became her mentor and friend. Firstenberg credits Mudd for teaching her how to use materials to express meaning. “That was the most important part of my art development,” she says. “His death was really hard. I owed him my career.”

Mudd had been consulting with her about her up-and-coming art installation, *Empty Fix*, just weeks before his passing. “He had just given me great advice about the seven-piece project.” To honor Professor Mudd, the Firstenbergs contributed to the Lincoln Mudd Scholarship Fund. ■

Left: Firstenberg worked with Laytonsville, Maryland-based Ruppert Landscaping to install the flags using plywood templates. Above: Volunteers planted 165,000 flags for three days in October to create the public display.

*“Let’s face it,” says Firstenberg, “who wants to do a Zoom funeral? It’s just not the same.”*

# David's Story

By Diane Bosser

## New Scholarship Honors Construction Professor and Encourages Students with Disabilities

David Lane took three buses from his home in Silver Spring, Maryland, to MC's Rockville Campus to attend construction classes at the Gudelsky Institute for Technical Education. Because he relied on public transportation, he built a toolbox on wheels and covered it to look like a carry-on bag. According to Professor Peter McNally, David wanted to avoid raising eyebrows while walking around with power tools. For eight years David attended classes, some that ended after 10 p.m. He was determined to learn all he could despite his disabilities.



David Lane, construction trades student with disabilities, attended courses at the Gudelsky Institute for Technical Education.

COURTESY JOSEPH LANE

David's story is more than a transportation story; it is one of determination. And of overcoming.

According to his brother, Joseph Lane, David experienced minimal brain damage at birth in 1955, when little was known about the effects of his injuries. Within a few years, several conditions manifested, including cognitive and behavioral challenges. At age eight, David was diagnosed with epilepsy; then, in his early teens, schizophrenia. He spent most of his teens and 20s in and out of mental institutions.

Despite his adversities, David remained optimistic. He became interested in carpentry at an early age. "He discovered that he liked building things and putting things together," Joseph recalls. "It was probably an inherited skill. Our grandfather on our mother's side,

who immigrated from Russia, came to New York and started a successful carpentry company."

After the family moved from Brooklyn to Silver Spring, Maryland, in the early 1960s, parents Benjamin and Shiela Pearle Lane found government and nonprofit organizations to work with David on a regular basis. "They [parents] were looking for ways to enable him to lead something close to a normal life," says Joseph. "And they never gave up on him."

In his early 20s, David decided he wanted to be a carpenter. An uncle taught him some carpentry, but it wasn't until a decade or so later that a neurologist got his epilepsy under control through a combination of medications. The breakthrough enabled David to lead a more independent life. He attended adult education classes, held several part-time jobs, lived in a group-home setting, and eventually moved into his own apartment—all with continued support from his family and, counselors, therapists, and nonprofit organizations. David was in his 50s when he first attended Montgomery College.

"David first came to my Intro to Building Trades class about eight years ago," says Professor Peter McNally, who has taught carpentry management courses at MC since 2006. "He always sat in the front row. And for eight solid years, he was just... determined.

He understood that he learned at a different pace, but he focused on what he needed to. And he asked for help. He just wanted to learn."

Each week for several years, McNally met with David outside of class to review the previous week's lessons. Later, when David experienced new health challenges—an injured knee, failing eyesight, and colon cancer treatments—which prevented him from coming to campus, the pair continued to connect via occasional phone calls.

*"David had a tendency to remain optimistic even in the most difficult circumstances..."*

"Those phone calls—maybe just 20 to 30 minutes talking about projects—meant the world to David," says Joseph. "Peter was someone who taught David the skills he wanted to learn, but he also understood he would need a lot of patience and guidance. He stayed with him and was available to him. He was a guidepost for David. He kept him excited and encouraged him where he could. These things made a huge difference in David's life."

David died on May 25, 2020, at the age of 65. In his memory, and in recognition of his parents and Peter McNally, Joseph Lane established the Lane-McNally Scholarship. The fund supports students in the construction trades programs who have financial difficulties and/or disabilities.

"David had a tendency to remain optimistic in even the most difficult circumstances," says Joseph, "keeping his focus on what he would do when he 'got this over-with' and could get on with his life. ... We want David's story to encourage and inspire others who may have disabilities but who refuse to let the adversity prevent them from realizing their potential. It provides a challenge as well as support. We want to see how far you can go—with help." ■



COURTESY JOSEPH LANE

David's custom toolbox enabled him to transport his tools to and from class via Metrobus.

# The Art of Retirement

## How Dabbling in Art Led One Couple To Do More

By Diane Bosser



COURTESY HELEN BLUMEN

Helen Blumen and Jan Acton's charitable giving has evolved from their first major gift of a kiln to the MC Art Department at the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus. The gift, inspired by trips to Japan in 2014 and 2016 and their personal art interests, started them on their way as MC Foundation donors. After receiving positive feedback on the kiln, they decided to expand their scope of giving toward programs and students with the greatest need.

"We understand that sometimes people have broader needs beyond tuition and books that threaten their ability to stay in school," says Blumen.

With help from MC Foundation staff, Blumen and Acton became ACES Pathway Champions Scholarship donors in 2018. Through the ACES program, they supported a student in the computer science program. He went on to graduate from The Universities at Shady Grove and embark on a career in his field.

Last year, the couple decided to prioritize nursing students. They made a five-year pledge that covers the cost of nursing simulation software, which is required for the program and which students normally pay for out of pocket. Blumen, a retired physician, knows firsthand the importance of qualified nurses in the health sector and the community—and the out-of-pocket costs associated with it. These expenses for nurses—upwards of

\$2,500—include CPR certifications, inoculations, simulation resources, and equipment.

"I have heard about students putting their RN certification testing on hold until they save up to pay for the testing fees," says Blumen. "Ridiculous!"

*"You don't have to be a millionaire to take local giving opportunities seriously."*

After her career as a physician, Blumen worked as a health plan medical director and held other positions in health services and actuarial consulting. Acton, an economist with a Ph.D., had a career in civil service and with a

private consulting firm. "We are not the people who are going to get our name on a campus building," says Blumen. "But it's important to us to help students now, and to do what we can for our community. You don't have to be a millionaire to take local giving opportunities seriously."

"We believe in giving while living," says Acton. "To be able to see our gifts in action gives us a sense of doing good. And this is right in our own backyard. These are our neighbors."

Blumen and Acton first made MC connections as students in the Art Department.

"I like taking classes with 'the kids.' They are fearless," says Blumen, 69, a general studies major specializing in fiber arts, and proud to say, on the dean's list. Acton, 76, is studying sculpture and 3D design at MC. "The classes I have taken rival those I have taken at the Corcoran School and Art League," says Acton. ■



The raku kiln, donated by Blumen and Acton, was installed in June 2017. A month later, after "seasoning of the kiln" (a process with no ceramics inside), the Art Department produced its first raku-fired glazed pieces.

## Fired Up with Funding

Raku is a process by which pottery is fired at a relatively low temperature and then moved while hot to a closed container with combustible materials (such as paper or sawdust) that ignite and cause a reaction. The process creates colors and patterns in the pottery's surface.

"The results are spectacular," says Megan Van Wagoner, associate professor of art at Montgomery College. "Shiny, metallic, and very different than the other firings we do."

"Many of us have found ways to utilize this firing process in our own studio practice and have incorporated it into our classes," says Van Wagoner. "And having a raku kiln on

campus has opened up one of the most hands-on firing processes to students."

Instructional Lab Coordinator Michael Anthony says the raku kiln also increases cultural enrichment in the curricula. "Students learn about the history of Japanese raku origins and are able to blend Japanese raku firing with an American interpretation."



COURTESY ART DEPARTMENT TAKOMA PARK/SILVER SPRING CAMPUS

## Alumna Leads Scholarship Growth

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck last spring, MC Foundation Director **Bobbi Shulman '66** knew it would affect MC students hard. Shulman reached out to her colleagues—current and retired College Trustees—to raise support.

Her effort paid off as her allies responded generously, including a pledge from Trustee Bob Levey and his wife, Jane, that will almost double the current Trustees' Circle Endowed Scholarship fund's impact.

A former communications and public affairs executive, Shulman now works as a contemporary artist, and volunteers in county activities and organizations. Her ties to the College go back to 1964 when she enrolled in night classes at the Takoma Park Campus. She was 19 years old and supporting herself as a secretary at the CIA.

"I think the tuition at MC was \$11 per credit hour then, something like \$33 per course. I could afford to take only one class at a time," she says.

Shulman later earned bachelor's and master's degrees, but she relied on MC for new skills and personal enrichment.

In 2000, she and her husband, Larry, established a family scholarship endowment. Later, they founded the Trustees' Circle Endowed Scholarship. Now, the couple is establishing the Shulman Programmatic Endowment.

"This program—which aligns with the College's new Presidential Scholars program—combines my background in workforce development with my interest in providing students who are most often underrepresented in college classrooms with practical assistance, resources, and encouragement to complete their degree programs," said Shulman.

Current and future students will benefit from the Shulman's commitment to ongoing support and her work via foundation networking, advocacy, and fundraising.

Above: Nearly 40 years after she first attended Montgomery College, Shulman returned to take art courses. She studied extensively with Professor Ed Ahlstrom at the Rockville Campus. She is an abstract expressionist contemporary artist and has exhibited her paintings at venues across the region.



COURTESY BOBBI SHULMAN

## PLANNED GIVING: Impact Over Glory

Philip M. Hallman knew Montgomery College, but Montgomery College didn't know Mr. Hallman. Philip Hallman was paying close attention to what was going on at the College and privately, quietly, and with great conviction made arrangements for a planned donation to MC that he knew would not be celebrated until after his passing.

On October 21, 2019, Philip Hallman died. But he had intentionally put a powerful legacy in place that would positively impact MC students for generations. Specifically, he had set aside \$190,821 of his estate to support an endowment for the Health Sciences Department and SEM (science, engineering, mathematics). When the money came to Montgomery College, it

was a surprise. The impact would be as big as Philip Hallman envisioned, yet he clearly wanted no fuss in his lifetime. "In my career in fundraising, these are the gifts that cause me to pause and imagine the donor's thought process. I imagine that at some point in his life, someone had lifted him up. These are always beautiful and amazing stories when we learn them, but in the absence of information, I can only hope he knew how grateful we would be," says Joyce Matthews, executive director of the Montgomery College Foundation.

Underscoring the gift's impact, Margaret Latimer, vice president and provost at Germantown says, "For many of the more than 6,000 science, technology, engineering, and math

(STEM) majors, their greatest challenge is not passing the rigorous courses in their curricula—it is the cost of attending college. This incredible gift will go far in helping many students complete their degrees."

According to the College's data, investing in STEM students and programs is also an investment in the larger community. Latimer cites a steady demand from the workforce for STEM graduates, which continues to grow as new fields emerge. The greater Washington region, for example, is home to more than 350 bioscience companies and several key federal research institutions, all seeking skilled workers.

To create a lasting legacy that creates opportunities for future workers, visit [montgomerycollegefoundation.planningyourlegacy.org](https://montgomerycollegefoundation.planningyourlegacy.org).

## Former Provost Remains Committed to Student Success

Retired Vice President and Provost of the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus, Dr. Bob Brown has made a lifelong commitment to supporting students and fostering greater education in the community. Particularly, he showed concern for students who are underrepresented in college classrooms: low income, first-generation, and immigrant/undocumented students.

Brown recently made a gift commitment to the Montgomery College Foundation for \$50,000. The gift will provide need-based scholarships to undocumented Montgomery College students, a population that often has a larger financial burden than other students.

"I think it is important for donors to know that they can specify a favorite cause or concept that they think needs to be addressed, so that the gift goes in that direction," said Brown.



COURTESY BOB BROWN

In recognition of Brown's service, the Montgomery College Board of Trustees has approved naming a space on the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus.

Brown joined the MC faculty in 1972 and taught mathematics to students at Takoma Park/Silver Spring and Germantown.

During his 11 years as provost, the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus became a minority-majority campus, a reflection of the demographic shifts occurring in

Montgomery County. He retired from the College in 2008.

**The College offers a variety of merit-based scholarships for graduating high school seniors from MCPS, which are open to Maryland DREAM and DACA students, including MC Foundation scholarships. To find out how you can support specific programs and causes, please visit the Montgomery College Foundation website and designate where you would like your gift to go.**

## Corporate Partners Help Students in Financial Crisis



ALUM

The pandemic created a crisis that threatened the ability of many MC students and their families to pay utilities and rent, purchase food, and stay in their homes, Stuart Tart, corporate and foundation relations director, says.

Tart says Lockheed Martin and Capital One are two of the hero companies that have helped MC students pay for short-term needs: food, shelter, childcare, transportation, and technology.

Lockheed Martin's \$75,000 grant to the MC Foundation in September 2020 is helping students through the College's Student Health and Wellness (SHaW) Center for Success. The SHaW Center provides emergency short-term support to students while staff connects them with longer-term community

assistance. One student, for example, was able to purchase a desk and a chair—items sometimes overlooked in the grand scheme of educational needs.

In an email to SHaW Center staff, the student writes: "Not having to share a desk with my siblings while on Zoom, or when doing homework, definitely improved my learning experience at Montgomery College."

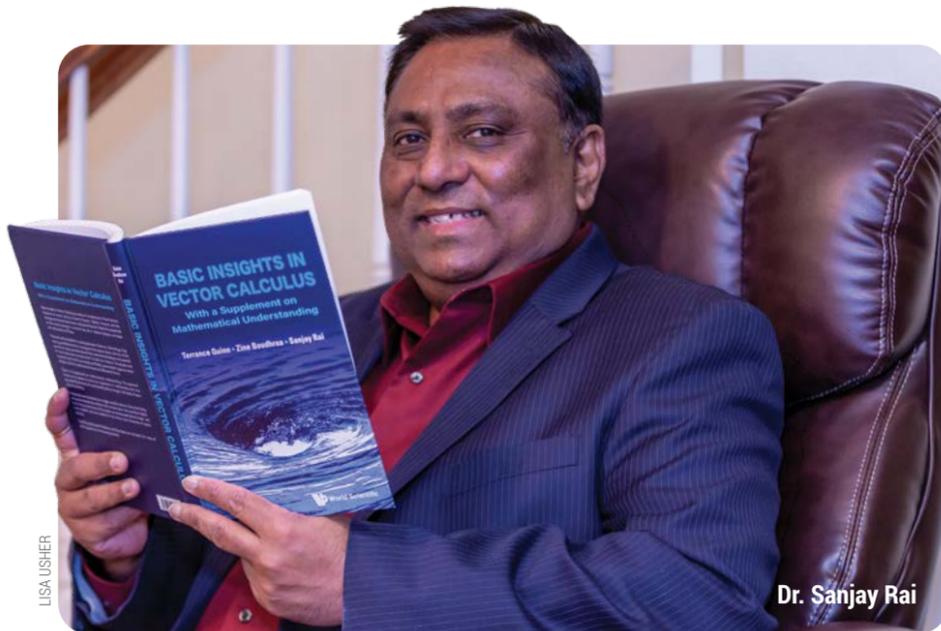
A grant last fall from Capital One is helping nearly 40 students in financial crisis. Through emergency assistance requests to the Montgomery College Foundation, recipients got help with academic costs, food and living expenses, and/or technology needed to access their classes.

From March through December 2020, the College and the MC Foundation distributed more than \$1 million to students in need through community emergency funding.

**For more information on corporate sponsorship for Montgomery College students, contact Stuart Tart, Office of Advancement and Community Engagement, 240-277-0292 [stuart.tart@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:stuart.tart@montgomerycollege.edu).**

## A Textbook Formula for Giving

Administrator Uses Book Royalties, Payroll Deduction to Benefit Students | By Jill Fitzgerald



LISA USHER

Dr. Sanjay Rai

Growing up in India, life was difficult for Sanjay Rai. Scarcity defined life in the small efficiency apartment with no air conditioning he lived in with his parents and sister. “My parents did not finish high school—and they had a hard life because of it,” he says.

“Had I not gotten into college, it would have been the end of the road for me,” says Rai, senior vice president of academic affairs at Montgomery College. When he left India to earn his master’s degree at Dalhousie University in Canada, he had \$50 in his pocket.

“I benefitted from the kindness of others,” he says, noting his college, graduate, and doctoral work, completed in three countries, was fully funded, through fellowships and stipends, by strangers.

“I want to do whatever I can to make an impact on our students,” says Rai, who is donating the royalties of his book, *Basic Insights in Vector Calculus: With a Supplement on Mathematical Understanding* to support MC student scholarships. Rai’s co-authors are Dr.

Terrence Quinn, professor emeritus at Middle Tennessee State University, who he met in graduate school, and Dr. Zine Boudhraa, a Rockville Campus math professor.

Rai started at MC in 2004 as the Rockville Campus dean of science, engineering, and mathematics. Dr. Jim O’Brien, a Rockville Campus physics professor, helped acclimate Rai to the College. When O’Brien died of a brain tumor in 2010, Rai began contributing to College scholarships through the Jim O’Brien Scholarship Fund.

When he was promoted to senior vice president in 2014, Rai continued his benevolence to students by donating his pay increase to fund the Rai Family Endowed Scholarship.

“Dr. Rai has been giving at a very high level for a long time,” says Noah Saposnik, major gifts and annual giving director. “Through his payroll deduction, he’s creating a lasting legacy for our students.”

In addition to his generosity, Rai has spearheaded a number of innovative initiatives that promote student success. And having faced adversity, removing barriers to academic achievement is his personal mission. Some of his accomplishments include, creating online degrees and using open educational resources; increasing partnerships with MCPS, leading to a dramatic increase in dual enrollment; launching the Achieving the Promise Academy, which provides academic coaching for underprepared students; and garnering \$25 million in U.S. Department of Labor grants.

In his previous role as Germantown Campus vice president and provost, he advanced important ventures including the Pinkney Innovation Complex for Science and Technology, Holy Cross Germantown Hospital, the Frank Islam Athenaeum Symposia, the Southern Management Leadership Program, and the Biological Sciences Education Building.

Rai believes Montgomery College is among the best community colleges in the nation—and is doing his part, both through his philanthropy and his leadership, to ensure it continues. “Education is the key to economic and social mobility throughout the world. Community colleges, in particular, are in the best position to meet the educational needs of the members of our communities,” he says.

## Producing and Directing Student Support

Employee’s Payroll Deduction Benefits Students in Radio and Television | By Jill Fitzgerald

**Stan Jones '77/'85** did not have a lot to be thankful for this past November. Separated because of the global pandemic, Jones celebrated Thanksgiving with his family over a Zoom meeting. Moreover, it was the first holiday without his dad, who died November 15 after a brief illness.

Jones, a producer/director for Montgomery College Television (MCTV), took comfort, however, knowing he honored his father’s—and his family’s legacy by supporting MC students through the Jones Family Endowed Scholarship.

His parents, both teachers, earned master’s degrees. They instilled in their children the importance of getting an education. “Montgomery College has been so good to me and my family,” he says, adding that his brother, Mike, a member of the Alumni Association Board of Governors, earned an A.A. in graphic design. His sisters, Jocelyn and Patrice, attended MC as did his own daughters, Devon and Whitney.

*“Montgomery College has been so good to me and my family...”*

Jones started at MC 44 years ago as a security guard. He earned an A.A. in criminal justice. After earning his second associate’s degree in broadcast journalism and interning at Channel 9 and Home Team Sports, he joined the staff at MCTV in 1988.

In 2010, at the behest of MCTV’s Managing Director Melissa Pace, Jones created an internship program for students at MCTV. He helped them hone their skills in television production, but he realized they needed tutoring in other subjects. He also noticed many of them did not have money for books or lunch. Jones remembers one particularly gifted student who left the College because he could not afford tuition for the next semester.

“That was a pivotal moment for me,” he says. Jones created the scholarship in October 2019. He finances it through monthly payroll deductions. It will be fully funded in 2024. “It fills my heart to know I will help eliminate financial barriers so that aspiring television/video producers can get an education,” he says.

“Stan joins a group of dedicated Montgomery College employees who have witnessed firsthand the struggles our



COURTESY STAN JONES

In 2010, Stan Jones, MCTV producer, created an internship program for MCTV students. In 2019, he created a scholarship for aspiring TV/video producers.

students face—and realize that a small sacrifice on their part can make a huge difference,” says Joyce Matthews, executive director of the foundation. According to Matthews, Montgomery College has an unusually high number of employees who contribute to scholarships.



## 2021: NEW YEAR / NEW PLAN

Take the necessary steps to update your estate plan so it meets your current goals. The checklist below can help you prepare, care for others, and manage the distribution of your assets.

- Review your will, checking for updates that may need to be made due to a change in your life or a beneficiary's life. Also consider the impact of any tax law changes or the decision to add a gift to Montgomery College Foundation in your plan.
- Check that the executor or personal representative you've named is still the qualified individual you want to manage your estate, resolve claims, minimize taxes, and distribute the designated portions to your beneficiaries.
- Be sure you are comfortable with the guardian named in your will for those under your care. If your dependents were minor children who are now grown, does a guardian still need to be listed?
- Look over beneficiaries designated for your insurance and retirement plans to make sure you haven't named a deceased loved one or a former spouse.
- Make sure the titles for your assets reflect your current circumstances and wishes, so they go to the people and organizations you intend.
- Implement a plan that minimizes taxes. One possible solution is to leave a charitable gift to the Montgomery College Foundation.
- Include a health care power of attorney to guide your family and health care providers when you are unable to make decisions for yourself.



**Work with your estate planning attorney to make any updates. Take the time to inform your beneficiaries of their status to avoid surprises later. There are a number of tax benefits when you use your estate plan to support the Montgomery College Foundation. For more information, contact Craig Eozzo or 240-479-1300 or [craig.eozzo@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:craig.eozzo@montgomerycollege.edu).**