

THE SUNY EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE MAGAZINE Connections

VOLUME 47 • SUMMER 2022

ALUMNI & FRIENDS OUTDOORS

History in
Plain Sight
Larry Henderson '19



A Musical Appreciation
of the Adirondacks
Peggy Lynn '05



Seal of Approval
Kevin Woo



SUNY EMPIRE
STATE COLLEGE

Editor

Winnie Yu

Managing Editor

Kimberly Neher

Graphic Designer

Casey Lumbra

Writers

Lindsey Clark
John Karcher '80
Kimberly Neher
Winnie Yu

Photographers

Kristy Biolsi
Zola Brown
Elaine Derby
Larry Henderson '19
Mary Hogan
Samer Lakis '18
Drew Monthie '99, '08
Anita Sillery '19
Brian Styk
Kevin Woo

Copy Editor

Mallory Holman

Acknowledgments

Stephanie Corp
Timothy Cosgriff '93
Jessica Cueva
David Fullard
Janet Jones
Stephanie Lamphere
Vicki Schaaque
Toby Tobrocke
Jill Vogel

Websites

www.esc.edu
www.esc.edu/alumni

Table of Contents

- 1 Letter from the Officer in Charge
- 2 Diving Toward a Sea Change
- 6 Happy Campers at SUNY Empire
- 10 History in Plain Sight
- 14 Bringing Books by Bike
- 16 Seal of Approval
- 20 Up and Running
- 22 A Musical Appreciation of the Adirondacks
- 25 Gardening With Kids
- 26 Conquering the Adirondack High Peaks
- 29 Did You Know
- 30 Fishing My Way Through the Pandemic
- 34 SUNY Empire Alumni, Working and Playing Outside
- 34 Alumni Notes
- 39 Alumni Events
- 40 In Memoriam



Cover photo:
On the Mediterranean
with Samer Lakis '18.

Letter From the Officer in Charge

In this issue of Connections, we celebrate the great outdoors. Whether we're guardians of its beauty and resources, or adventurers who enjoy its recreational offerings, one thing is for sure: the SUNY Empire community has tremendous passion for the open air.

From the sandy beaches of the Mediterranean to the waters of New York City to the peaks of the Adirondack Mountains, we find purpose and pleasure in our natural surroundings. In Lebanon, **Samer Lakis '18** calls attention to the plight of the Mediterranean Sea by diving into its depths and exposing the beauty beneath the surface (his image is on the cover). In Manhattan, **Associate Professor Kevin Woo** tracks the return of harbor seals to the busy waterways of New York City. In the Adirondacks, **Peggy Lynn '05** shares her love of the outdoors with the songs she writes, while **David Theobald '13, '17** and his son Michael climb the 46 high peaks, donating to scholarships each time they reach the top.

SUNY Empire takes advantage of our location in Saratoga Springs by offering our annual Adirondack Environmental Studies Residency, a staple that celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. Our Office of Alumni Engagement makes the most of our surroundings with outings like maple sugaring at the Genesee Country Village in Mumford, NY.

While many of us took to the open air as a safe place to gather during the pandemic, our love affair with the great outdoors won't disappear any time soon. I hope this issue will inspire you to spend more time outside and maybe even become an advocate for its protection and preservation.

Sincerely,

Nathan Gonyea
Officer in Charge



SUNY EMPIRE
STATE COLLEGE

DIVING TOWARD A SEA CHANGE

Samer Lakis '18 has his reasons for revealing the underwater beauty of the Mediterranean Sea.

By Winnie Yu

A mottled sea hare gracefully glides through the water. A sea turtle coasts along the sea floor, flippers in perpetual motion. Two Mediterranean hermit crabs engage in a mysterious dance on the seabed. Through the lens of his underwater camera, Samer Lakis '18 escorts us to the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea, revealing an aquatic kingdom that's among the most dynamic and diverse in the world.

A scuba diver and artist, Lakis grew up in Byblos, Lebanon, an ancient city on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, and attended SUNY Empire's Center for International Education in Beirut, Lebanon. SUNY Empire has eight international locations, which also includes Athens,

Greece, Prague in the Czech Republic, and Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. His childhood memories are filled with the beauty of the Mediterranean, where he swam in the waters and played in the sand.

Lakis learned to scuba dive in 2007 from his sister Sahar. Three years later, the siblings launched the Xiphias Scuba Diving Club. The club teaches scuba diving and swimming to students ranging in age from 12 to 63.

"Taking a late-night swim or a dive in the early morning has always been my inner sanctum," he says. "Language feels a bit too narrow to merely describe what it feels like to live, move around, or be underwater."

A Manmade Mess

In recent years, the Mediterranean has become less idyllic. Increasing amounts of garbage pile up on the mountains near the sea and are blown to the Mediterranean during winter storm season. "Part of it floats and rests along the beaches, and other parts drown in the sea and reside there, polluting and contaminating marine life," Lakis says.

He recalls seeing a vial of human blood amid piles of trash on the beach, calling it an "ominous moment." He bristles at the memory of spotting face masks on the beach, imagining their slow degradation and eventual consumption by fish. "And no one is doing anything for the underwater garbage issue," he says.

The growing abundance of garbage alarmed him. In 2020, Lakis and his fiancée, Laura Khatib, started Guardians of the Blue, a nonprofit dedicated to cleaning up the Mediterranean and raising awareness of the threats to its fragile ecosystem.

This May, Lakis organized an impromptu cleanup with another diver and two volunteers. They spent two hours cleaning up the Byblos harbor and removed 84 tires. Last June, with help from 14 volunteer scuba divers, the group collected 660 pounds of trash and 2,220 pounds of tires over two and a half hours across

five square kilometers in the Byblos harbor.

They stuffed the trash into bags they'd found in the sea since the previous winter.

Part of Lakis' cleanup efforts also involves hunting lionfish, a venomous predator

that has made its way to the Mediterranean through the Suez Canal by way of the Red Sea, thanks to warming oceans caused by climate change. The invasive species has reduced the Mediterranean's biodiversity, threatening the survival of its inhabitants and jeopardizing the region's fishing economy.



Lakis scuba diving in search of lionfish.



A loggerhead turtle swims near the bottom of the Mediterranean.

Lakis uses a hand spear to capture the lionfish one by one and brings them to the surface, where he clips the fish's 18 highly venomous stingers. Lakis then sells the lionfish to restaurants, fisheries, and individuals. "They're very healthy and tasty," he adds.

Whenever he's down in the depths of the Mediterranean, Lakis tries to document the marine life he sees. He posts the images and footage on social media, so people can see the creatures living deep down below.





Lakis was commissioned to do this painting on an exterior wall.

“My goal is raising environmental awareness (so people will) take care of the sea,” he says.

His passion for the Mediterranean has earned him the nickname “Poseidon,” says his fiancée, Khatib. “No one is connected to the sea in the way he is,” she says. “His deeper understanding of life below water allows him to excel at scuba diving and underwater fishing in an almost surreal way.”

“My goal is raising environmental awareness (so people will) take care of the sea.”

Living Day by Day

Teaching scuba diving and hunting lionfish supplements Lakis’s income to pursue his other passion: art. “I paint murals, ceilings, canvases, for a living, anything artistic that comes (my) way,” says Lakis, who got a degree in graphic design from SUNY Empire.

Lakis is also a musician who sings and plays guitar, bass, and ukulele.

Lakis isn’t sure how long he’ll remain in Lebanon, where the economy is in a freefall, the currency has greatly depreciated, and poverty is skyrocketing. In 2019, the lionfish he caught sold for \$20 per kilogram. Today, he gets \$4.

“For now, I’m living in Byblos,” Lakis says. “I am not sure for how long because the country has been sinking in an economic collapse. The future seems a bit obscure in Lebanon, and I can say that I’m living day by day.”

Lakis says he may eventually move to Cyprus or Greece, where he can still live by the sea. “I guess I’m bound to the Mediterranean,” he says. “The sea salt is in me.”

Your Generosity at Work



“There were times I thought I would not get to cross the finish line. Times when I had to stop or suspend my studies because my children needed me or I did not have the money to spare on so much as a textbook, let alone for the tuition. To be given the opportunity to complete my life’s dream all due to the generosity of donors and this scholarship is an absolute honor. It is literally a gamechanger. Your kindness and compassion has enabled another person to do something they would not be able to do on their own. That is a very powerful gift to bestow into the world.”

— Maria Fitzgerald, B.S. Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Studies

Scholarships can bring a SUNY Empire degree within reach. Generous annual gifts from alumni and friends to The Fund for SUNY Empire State College support our robust scholarship program, as well as faculty and staff development, a rigorous yet flexible academic program, and whatever is needed across our statewide campus to help students like Maria succeed.

For more information or to make your gift, please visit www.esc.edu/giving or email Stephanie Corp (Stephanie.Corp@esc.edu). Thank you!



OFFICIAL ONLINE STORE
SUNYEMPIREGEAR.COM

SHOP AT THE OFFICIAL ONLINE STORE AND
SHOW OFF YOUR SUNY EMPIRE PRIDE!

VISIT US ONLINE AT SUNYEMPIREGEAR.COM



Happy Campers at SUNY Empire

By Lindsey Clark

For nearly a quarter of a century, SUNY Empire's Adirondack Environmental Studies Residency has been a constant in Drew Monthie '99, '08's life. He's been a participant of the residency since its debut in 1997, as both a student and an instructor. "When October arrives each year, I know I will get to see old friends and colleagues, meet my students, learn new things, and make new friends," he says.

Last October, SUNY Empire hosted its 25th annual Adirondack Residency for students, faculty, and staff. This blended course model is SUNY Empire's first and longest running residency.

Residencies offer unique opportunities for students to study through hands-on activities, face-to-face workshops, and experiential learning. Other residencies explore topics such as the Revolutionary War Era, Arts in Our Communities, Civil War History, and Ecology and Earth Systems Field Research.

Lessons in the Great Outdoors

At the Adirondack Residency, students choose from nine, environment-related courses that combine an online or independent study component with one onsite meeting at the historic Camp Huntington in Raquette Lake, surrounded by the beautiful Adirondack Mountains. Courses in past years have included Environmental Ethics, Community Supported Agriculture, Nature Writing, History of the National Parks, Environmental Geography, Plants and Society, Nature Photography, Adirondack History, and the History of Hiking. Courses are often rotated out with new courses being added every year.

While at camp, students attend nature-focused seminars and participate in group activities. The unique setting and experience provide students with a broader perspective on issues related to the environment and offers hands-on activities to enhance the learning experience (See "A Musical Appreciation of the Adirondacks" on page 22). The format gives students the opportunity to interact with their instructors

and fellow students, share experiences about life and academia, and forge friendships and support systems — which can often be difficult when learning online.

"It was the experience of sleepaway camp that I always wanted as a kid. I met really great people and saw the way in which our residencies create success with our blended learning."

In addition to the residency experience, faculty and students take turns with kitchen duty and the cleanup of classroom and dorm spaces. "There's a culture and a history to this residency where we wanted to leave the space better than when we came," says Kelly Mollica, SUNY Empire's director of partnerships, who attended the residency in fall 2021. "It was the experience of sleep-away camp that I always wanted as a kid. I met really great people and saw the way in which our residencies create success with our blended learning."

Another Year to Branch Out

According to SUNY Empire's Decision Support office, residency students have higher success rates than students in non-blended course models. The degree completion rate for students who incorporate residencies into their studies is 7% greater than those who do only online courses.



Durant Cabin at Camp Huntingon in Racquette Lake is one of the buildings where participants stay.



Drew Monthie '99, '08, has been attending the Adirondack Residency since it started in 1997, as both a student and an instructor.

For Monthie, his longstanding affiliation with the Adirondack Residency began during his undergraduate years, when his mentor, Marlene Evans, Ph.D., recommended that he explore the new residency the college was offering that fall in the Adirondack Mountains.

It was there where he met other environmental education students interested in wildlife, environmental law, and conservation. "The exposure to a wide range of environmental perspectives from fellow students helped me to grow as a student and person," Monthie says. "This was the beginning of my ongoing affiliation with the Adirondack residency."

Since then, Monthie has gone back every year and plans to return again this fall. "There is camaraderie among the faculty and students where we have coffee together with our students and watch the sunrise or sunset on the docks. We eat together, bus tables, and sit around the fire and talk. As an instructor working remotely, this is a special experience." 🍂



The Boyer Legacy Society honors Ernest L. Boyer and his vision of accessible and affordable higher education for students of all ages and backgrounds.

Giving with Gratitude



"Supporting education and helping people get a degree so they can climb the ladder to have a more secure future is important. It has been very gratifying to receive [thank you] letters from the recipients and know we've made a difference in their lives."

— Margaret McAloon, MD,
Boyer Legacy Society member

Membership is open to all who notify us of their decision to include the college in their estate plans. Contact Toby Tobrocke (Toby.Tobrocke@esc.edu) to explore ways you can join Dr. McAloon in supporting the future of SUNY Empire State College.

ALUMNI REFER-A-STUDENT PROGRAM

Do you have a friend, family member, or colleague interested in starting or finishing their degree?

Through the Alumni Refer-a-Student Program, a friend, colleague, or family member you refer to SUNY Empire State College can receive a \$100 Better Together scholarship toward one term of enrollment and a \$50 orientation fee waiver. In addition, we'll put them in touch with a recruitment professional from their area to answer any questions they have during the application process.

Visit [Alumni Refer-A-Student Program](#) for more information or contact the alumni office at Alumni@esc.edu.

Refer a student today and let future SUNY Empire alumni know their dreams are within reach!



History in Plain Sight

Larry Henderson '19 Shares Stories About Black Americans on His NYC Walking Tours

By Winnie Yu

Larry Henderson Jr. '19 was a paralegal for 20 years when he left the corporate world in 2016 to pursue his dreams of doing photography and writing a book about African American history. Today, visitors to New York City are reaping the rewards of that decision. Henderson conducts “You Are Here Walking Tours” of Harlem and Lower Manhattan. The tours are based on his book, “You Are Here: A Geographical History of Enslaved and Free Africans in Manhattan from 1613 to 1865,” which he self-published in 2021.



In this Q&A, Henderson, a Harlem native who now lives on Staten Island, sat down to talk to us about his tours, his guests, and some of his most memorable moments.

You were a paralegal who loved doing photography. How did you wind up becoming a tour guide in New York City?

I had no plans on becoming a tour guide. However, in 2019, some of my friends told me about their Airbnb tour experience and advised me to start a tour and base it on the book I wrote. At first, I said, “No way.” After a few more people, including (David) Fullard (professor and mentor at SUNY Empire), suggested the idea, I decided to try this new adventure. As soon as I posted the experience on Airbnb, someone booked a tour the next day.

When did you start giving tours, and where are they?

I started in December 2020 with the downtown Manhattan tours. We visit more than 20 sites on each tour. The Harlem tour started in January 2022. I've done more than 200 tours in lower Manhattan, and only 25 tours in Harlem, but it's picking up.

When do you do these tours?

All the time. I've done them in 22-degree weather, snowstorms, rainstorms, heat waves. If you're willing to book a tour, I'm willing to give it.

“I also wanted to present history from a Black perspective. History is often told through Eurocentric eyes. It's rarely told from a Black person's point of view.”

Why do this?

The history of New York is hidden in plain sight. It's in street signs, monuments, flags, buildings, and statues. New Yorkers don't pay attention to the history that's right in front of them and have no clue as to its significance. I wanted to highlight the history in places that New Yorkers pass on a daily basis. I also wanted to present history from a Black perspective. History is often told through Eurocentric eyes. It's rarely told from a Black person's point of view.

Who are some of the most memorable figures on your tours?

There's Juan Rodriguez, a native of the Dominican Republic, who was the first documented non-Native American to live on Manhattan in 1613. When he was left on the island, Juan had to learn the way of the Natives. He assimilated into their culture and married a Native American from the Lenape tribe. I traced his home to a plot on Mill Lane between Beaver and South William streets. Today, he has a street named after him in Washington Heights.

Elizabeth Jennings is another interesting part of the tour. Like Rosa Parks, she held her ground when a streetcar operator tried to throw her off public transportation in 1865. She later sued and won.

Then there's Thomas Downing who opened Downing's Oyster House on 3-5 Broad St. His elite restaurant fed New York City's politicians and powerbrokers, while Thomas and his son helped enslaved Africans escape on the Underground Railroad. And there's Fraunces' Tavern, opened by Samuel Fraunces in 1762, which became and still is an upscale dining establishment.

What's your favorite stop on the tours?

My favorite place is the last stop downtown, the African Burial Ground National Monument. It's at 290 Broadway behind Foley's Square next to the courthouse. It's a sacred place where enslaved Africans were buried.

When they set out to build a federal building on the site, activists in 1991 protested. As a result of that struggle, they dedicated a plot of land and called it the African Burial Ground National Monument.

I never know what guests will do there. Sometimes they'll cry. Sometimes, they meditate to the ancestors. On another visit, one guest stepped over the rope separating



Henderson on a tour with Anita Sillery '19, a classmate from SUNY Empire.

the walkway from the skeletal re-interment plots and laid on top of one of the seven sacred mounds.

Have you ever been surprised by something you didn't know?

One of my biggest surprises on the Harlem tour was at the Harriet Tubman statue. There's a community gardener who's been gardening there since 1969, and he showed me cotton growing parallel to the statue. I was shocked.

Who signs up for your tours?

I get people from all over the world and all backgrounds. I've had companies book tours for their employees; professors who bring their students; and travel, family, and



Henderson led a group of SUNY Empire students, alumni, and faculty on a tour of Harlem this May, as part of a Black Male Initiative Live on Location event.

children's groups. Over the holiday season I had a group of 40 teenagers, sponsored by Big Brothers Big Sisters program in Chicago.

We ended the tour dining at the famous Sylvia's Soul Food restaurant in Harlem.

I've had tours as small as one person and as large as 40 people.

Tell us about a memorable tour.

I once had a Harlem tour that lasted from 2 p.m. to 2 a.m. These were two women from San Francisco, and they wanted to "paint the town red." They were very generous and buying donuts, coffee, and used clothes for homeless people on the street.

Then they wanted to see a live jazz performance, so we went to Minton's Playhouse. It was so good that we saw it twice. Then they wanted to have dinner. As we were leaving the show, there was a domestic violence situation in the street. These two women got between the man and the woman and broke it up. I told them that that was pretty dangerous. And just when I thought the evening was ending, they wanted to take the ferry to Staten Island with me to get a close-up night photo of the Statue of Liberty.

Now we're friends on social media, and last Christmas, they sent me a \$50 gift card to a bar we went to.

How many steps do you log on a tour?

Each tour is about 10,000 steps. The downtown tour lasts three hours, and the Harlem tour is two and a half hours. It keeps me in shape. Good thing I was in relatively good shape when I started the tours.

Where can people learn more about your tours?

For more information about my tours, contact alumni@esc.edu. 🍷

Bringing Books by Bike



Bruce Tehan '06 rides to events in the Arnett, NY, area with Books by Bike.

“One of the neatest things about providing this service is when kids and adults excitedly flag me down as I’m heading to and from events as if I was driving the ice cream truck.”

On any given day in Rochester, NY, Bruce Tehan '06 can be spotted riding his 21-speed Trek hybrid, a small blue trailer packed with books in tow. He brings cookbooks to farmers markets, children’s books to story times, and books about bikes to bicycle clinics.

The program is called Books by Bike, a service of the Arnett Branch Library of the Rochester Public Library and the Monroe County Library System. Tehan is one of a handful of librarians tasked with towing the blue trailer, and he’s thrilled he gets to merge his love of bicycling with his passion for reading.

“I love to be outdoors, so I always enjoy doing library activities outside,” says Tehan, who is the Arnett library’s children’s services librarian and branch manager. “One of the neatest things about providing this service is when kids and adults excitedly flag me down as I’m heading to and from events as if I was driving the ice cream truck.”

Tehan enjoys seeing people get excited about books and reading and frequently bumps into the library’s regular patrons at events. He also meets new people, which gives him the opportunity to brag about all the services the library has to offer.

Library Coming to You

Books by Bike debuted in the spring of 2015. The goal was threefold: to increase the branch’s ability to provide library services during outreach events in the community, increase the library’s visibility in the community, and promote sustainability by showcasing bicycling as a clean mode of transportation. With support from the city,

the Rochester Public Library, and the Arnett branch staff, the project was an immediate hit.

Today, from April to October, Books by Bike is out in the community every week — sometimes twice a week — at everything from festivals and fairs to schools and police outreach events. Sometimes, they offer book giveaways, while other times they let people check out the books. Other times, it’s a combination of both.

“Most places we take it are less than two or three miles away from the Arnett branch but I have taken it farther afield on rare occasions,” Tehan says. “My guess is that a couple 10-mile round trips have been my longest journeys.”

Luckily, he says, the trailer isn’t too heavy.

A Love of Biking

Tehan doesn’t call himself a serious cyclist, but he’s always enjoyed biking, a passion he shares with his wife, Sheri. The couple often cycles on the region’s trails and roads, whether it’s the Greenway Trail, the Keuka Lake Outlet trail, or the roads near their home in Rochester.

Since its launch, Books by Bike has been “wildly popular,” Tehan says. “The service is so well received that the Rochester Public Library and Monroe County Library system now have a fleet of three that’s used by several library staff, and many branches and town libraries borrow them,” he says. “It certainly has been an important way to reach some folk who have not been comfortable entering buildings during the pandemic.” ●

SEAL OF APPROVAL



Kevin Woo devotes winters to looking for pinnipeds in the waters of America's largest urban enclave.

By Winnie Yu



Imagine you're a harbor seal in the waterways of New York City.

You arrive in the crisp, waning days of autumn from Maine and the northeastern waters of Canada. Near the seaport in lower Manhattan, you encounter noisy commercial vessels coming to and from the ports. Around the beaches, you are met with the last of the recreational boaters and occasional commercial fishermen. And yet you return year after year to spend your winters in the waters not far from some of the world's most iconic skyscrapers.

Kevin Woo wants to know why.

For the last 11 years, Woo, a professor of science, math, and technology at SUNY Empire, along with some of his students, has studied the seals that have returned to the New York City waterways, more than a century after they left the area. "The numbers show they're returning," he says. "That's a sign of positive environmental changes."



Kevin Woo with his seals at the Long Island Aquarium.

Sealing their Fate

Seals are semi-aquatic mammals that haul out on land to dry off, molt, and have babies. The rest of the time, they're in the water, hunting, eating, and traveling. The harbor seals that Woo studies most likely spend their summers in Maine or the northeastern waters of Canada, in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Every October, they come south for the winter, sometimes as far as the Delaware Bay, and stay until April, when they swim back north again.

"One hundred years ago, seals were common here," says Woo, who is based in SUNY Empire's Manhattan location. "With industrialization, pollution, and the collapse of food systems and the food web in New York City, it made all species disappear for a long while."

About 20 years ago, Woo began hearing about seal sightings in the New York harbors. For Woo, the return of pinnipeds to the area raised a host of questions: Why did they return? What led to their initial decline? What are the new challenges they face? And why do they keep returning every year, despite these challenges?

Woo is stunned that the seals have chosen an area where giant freighters are a constant source of distressing noise pollution, and human activities produce other kinds of environmental hazards. Woo wonders whether the quality of their food — fish, clams, mussels and snails — has improved or whether the seals have become habituated to manmade impacts. Or perhaps they've simply learned to overcome or avoid them. "We're trying to understand what these anthropogenic challenges are and how they might affect them," Woo says. "We're trying to paint that holistic picture."

A Passion for Animals

Woo grew up in Bayside, Queens, where he spent little time outdoors. His passion for marine mammals began when he was an undergraduate at Long Island University majoring in psychobiology. He went to Costa Rica in 1999 to study bottlenose dolphins and then to Central America to study tucuxi dolphins. He got a Ph.D. in animal behavior from Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia.

Woo was intrigued to learn that marine mammals are biomarkers for the health of an ecosystem. After hearing about anecdotal seal sightings, he began unofficially tracking pinnipeds in 2011. Three years later, he and Kristy Biolsi, Ph.D., a former classmate at LIU and an associate professor of psychology at St. Francis College, co-founded the Center for the Study of Pinniped Ecology and Cognition (C-SPEC).

One of the first things they did was a survey to find out what residents knew about marine mammals and conservation in New York City. “We found out that more than

70% of respondents thought conservation was important but were not aware of any species or organizations in New York City, and therefore didn’t participate in them,” Woo says. The majority also had no idea that marine mammals such as seals, dolphins, and whales lived in the New York City waters.

“The marine mammal question provided validity for us to start the survey work,” Woo says. “It clearly demonstrated an absence of knowledge about the animals in our own backyards.”

Getting Students Involved

These days, between October and April, Woo and Biolsi do 20 to 30 site visits to Swinburne Island, which is east of Staten Island, and Orchard Beach in the Bronx. They go by land when the tide is low and the seals are easily spotted hauled out on the land, or by boat when a vessel is available. They’re currently seeing about 100 seals, with the number increasing slightly each year.



Woo is stunned that the seals have chosen an area where giant freighters are a constant source of distressing noise pollution, and human activities produce other kinds of environmental hazards.

When Woo and Biolsi aren’t on the waters, they’re working at the Long Island Aquarium in Riverhead, NY, where they study the seals in captivity. Among their current projects is looking at the frontal and orthogonal profiles of the seals and applying an algorithm that’s been used on manatees and dolphins to reliably identify individual seals.

Students from SUNY Empire and other colleges sometimes join them in their fieldwork and aquarium research. Some have even presented their work at national conferences. One recent graduate, Lauren Trifone ’19, was the lead author of a study published in a peer-reviewed journal by the International Marine Animal Trainers Association. The study found that visitor presence did not influence the behavior of harbor seals at the Long Island Aquarium.

Woo and Biolsi are now what one journalist calls “New York City’s dynamic seal scientist duo,” and their work has received global attention. In 2020, filmmaker Thomas Halaczinsky featured their research in his three-part documentary, “Archipelago New York,” which explores the natural history of New York City. The film also documents the return of nature to this urban setting and the role that nature will play in the city’s future. The documentary is currently playing in Europe and is expected in the U.S. soon.

Back to Nature

The ultimate goal is to identify individual seals. The seals are hard to distinguish at first but do have unique markings and distinct personalities. “You treat these animals like friends,” Woo says. “Each one is going to have slightly different morphological features or imperfections. They’re also going to have different personality traits. You become really attuned to those fine differences.”

Being able to recognize individual seals will help them determine whether it’s the same seals returning every year, and if they’re recruiting other seals, bringing their pups, or both. “We want to understand what keeps them in an area like New York City, which is one of the busiest waterways in the world,” he says. “I think it’s impressive that they find New York City desirable.”

With the rise in seal sightings comes a parallel increase in the number of sharks, which prey on seals. Woo does not despair. Both, he says, are promising harbingers for New York City’s ecosystem.

“If you think of the health of an ecosystem, you have to think of all the players, and all the players have to be healthy,” he says. “If their prey is returning and it’s enough to sustain seals and it draws in other larger predators, what we’re looking at is a return to the marine ecosystem, pre-human intervention, pre-human interaction, and pre-anthropogenic activity. That’s really the goal, not just a return for marine life but a return to nature the way it was.” 🍌

UP AND RUNNING

Anita DeCianni-Brown '12, '15 took up running as a favor and wound up doing the biggest marathon of all.



Anita DeCianni-Brown '12, '15 never considered herself a runner. But last November, she completed the New York City Marathon.

DeCianni-Brown took up running in 2013 when she offered to do the Freihofer's Run for Women, an annual 5K in Albany, NY, in place of a friend who was diagnosed with breast cancer. "I told her I would run in her honor, but it was going to be a one and done thing because I wasn't a runner, not even close," says DeCianni-Brown, SUNY Empire's collegewide career development coordinator. "I used the Couch to 5K app and did two months of training. I crossed the finish line that first race and have been running ever since."

DeCianni-Brown was hooked. She did two Dopey Challenge events at Disney World, which involves running four races — the 5K, 10K, half marathon, and marathon — on consecutive days as well as several other races. In 2020, DeCianni-Brown and three friends decided to enter the lottery for the New York City Marathon. Because the marathon was celebrating its 50th anniversary, it drew a record number of 185,000 entries. Only 55,000 are accepted. DeCianni-Brown and her friends were not.

Runners not selected by lottery can apply to run for a charity, which requires completing a lengthy application, doing an interview, and designating a charity. DeCianni-Brown chose the Boston Children's Hospital because she knew several children who had undergone treatment there.



Anita DeCianni-Brown, left, with her running partner, Lydia Kulbida, a long-time news anchor in the Capital Region, after they finished the New York City Marathon.

Raising the money became a challenge when the pandemic hit, and the marathon was postponed. "We each had to raise the money, or we had to make up the difference with our personal funds," DeCianni-Brown said.

DeCianni-Brown got creative. She made and sold etched glass on Facebook. She also sewed and sold face masks with holes for straws. Her hard work paid off, and she raised \$4,000, surpassing the \$3,500 that was required.

On July 1, 2021, she began training for the marathon. The race was held November 7. Together with her running partner, Lydia Kulbida, a news anchor on WTEN-10, they were able to finish in five hours and 23 minutes. "Running the New York City Marathon, for the 50th running of the marathon as we were in a global pandemic, is literally an experience I will carry with me forever," DeCianni-Brown says.

These days, DeCianni-Brown continues to run. She trains year-round both outdoors and indoors and goes to the gym for strength conditioning. She has several 5K races planned and will do the Dopey Challenge again in 2023. 🍌



A MUSICAL APPRECIATION OF THE ADIRONDACKS

By Lindsey Clark

Peggy Lynn '05 has always found inspiration in the Adirondack Mountains, as a singer, a songwriter, and a lecturer at SUNY Empire State College.

She first discovered the Adirondacks as a child when her family took vacations there. As a student getting an associate degree in forestry at Paul Smith's College, she began writing songs about the mountains themselves and the people there.

One of her first songs was about Lydia Smith, who helped her husband, Paul, build a hospitality empire on the Canadian border and whose name graces the only four-year college in the Adirondacks. "When I sang the song about Lydia, people heard it and suggested a few other Adirondack women to me," she says. "I started to research other women's stories and put those into music as well."

Soon, Lynn was performing at folk festivals and coffeehouses. Among the women she sang about was Martha Reben, the author who was cured of tuberculosis after time spent in the Adirondacks. She also sang about Inez Milholland, a suffragist and lawyer whose family lived in the Adirondacks, and Orra Phelps, M.D., a physician and botanist who wrote the first guidebook about the high peaks for the Adirondack Mountain Club.

Lynn's original songs span several other genres and themes. In addition to her ballads about strong women, she sings and

writes feminist anthems, children's songs, comedy, and blues.

Educational Pursuits

Her fascination with Adirondack women led her to SUNY Empire, where she earned a bachelor's degree in women's studies. She went on to get her master's degree in American and women's history at SUNY Oswego.

In 2007, she joined SUNY Empire as an instructor in history and women's studies. She retired last August from mentoring. These days, when Lynn isn't performing

or writing songs, she's teaching online classes at SUNY Empire. Last fall, she taught a course at the Adirondack Residency called Adirondack Song and Story (see story on page 6).

In this course, Lynn challenges her

students to examine forms of writing and the emotional connection to Adirondack folklore. Her class learns about the history and culture of the Adirondack region by reading stories and poems and listening to traditional and original songs, from ballads of lumber camps to tall tales of explorers and sportsmen. Her goal is for her students to appreciate the inspiration behind the message and examine the artistic expression of singing and storytelling.

"I want my students to know that anyone can find solace and inspiration in the wilderness," she says. "Being one with nature allows you to really identify who it is that you want to be."

"I want my students to know that anyone can find solace and inspiration in the wilderness. Being one with nature allows you to really identify who it is that you want to be."

Back to the Adirondacks

Although Lynn lived in Red Creek in Central New York for many years, her true sanctuary is in the Adirondack Mountains. “I find that being outdoors lets me, and other women, be themselves without needing to worry too much about how we present ourselves with how we dress or what we say,” Lynn says. “It opens the gates to being who we want to be.”

An avid hiker, Lynn passed on her love of hiking when she had a family of her own. “My daughters and I started hiking the High Peaks and we completed about 21 of them before they got to be teenagers,” says Lynn who has two grown daughters and three grandchildren.

In addition to ascending 21 of the 46 High Peaks, Lynn has climbed almost all the Adirondack Fire Towers and completed nine of the peaks that are part of the Tri-Lakes TRIFECTA, another hiking challenge that requires participants to climb 18 peaks in Saranac Lake, Tupper Lake, and Lake Placid.



When she married her husband Dan Duggan, a musician known for his talent on the hammered dulcimer, she moved into his house in Red Creek and lived there for 20 years. Two years ago, the couple came back to the Adirondacks and now live near Saranac Lake. “It was always my dream to move back to the Adirondacks, which we did in 2020,” Lynn says. “Being here again now, it’s so beautiful to have the mountains, lakes, and wildlife right outside my door.” 🍷

“GARDENING WITH KIDS IS SO MUCH FUN!”

John Corrou '94 of Saratoga Springs has been gardening all his life. His vegetable garden includes onions, carrots, tomatoes, and lettuce. In recent years he began to garden with his grandchildren. “Gardening with kids is so much fun, and my grandchildren love to be outside,” says Corrou, a member of the SUNY Empire State College Foundation board. “I use this as a teaching moment. Through gardening, children start to understand where their food comes from. They learn you don’t just go to a store to buy vegetables.”



“Gardening promotes overall health, and improves physical strength, cognitive abilities, and flexibility.”

—Thalia MacMillan, Ph.D., MSW, EMT, chair of the Department of Health and Human Services, Addiction Studies, who has researched the benefits of gardening in seniors





CONQUERING THE ADIRONDACK HIGH PEAKS

"Sometimes you want to give up, and sometimes you doubt yourself. But you keep going, and at the end, you see what you've accomplished. It's certainly worth the effort to do the climb and get to the top."

—David Theobald '13, '17

Michael and David
Theobald at the top
of Basin Mountain
in May 2021.



He went snowshoeing and ice fishing in the winter. He played golf in the spring and summer. He was a skier who taught adaptive skiing to children battling life-threatening illnesses at the Double H Ranch in Lake Luzerne, NY.

But for David Theobald, R.N., '13, '17, hiking was only an occasional activity. Then the pandemic hit, and his youngest son, Michael, asked if they could hike the High Peaks of the Adirondacks. Theobald couldn't resist.

Reaching the Top 46 Times

The High Peaks are part of the Adirondack Mountains in northeastern New York, the largest protected land area in the contiguous U.S., with more than 2,000 miles of hiking trails, over 3,000 lakes and ponds, and 1,200 miles of rivers. At 5,344 feet, Mount Marcy is the highest peak. The lowest peak is Couchsachraga, which stands 3,820 feet.

Climbing all 46 was a tradition that began in 1918 when brothers Robert and George Marshall and their friend Herbert Clark ascended Whiteface Mountain, then set out to hike the remaining 45 peaks. Hikers who do all 46 peaks are known as 46ers.

Theobald, a father of four and founder and president of Davin Healthcare Workforce Solutions in Saratoga Springs, and Michael began by climbing smaller mountains that took them to fire towers on Hadley and Spruce Mountains. Once they did their

first high peak, Rocky Peak Ridge, they were hooked. They joined the Adirondack Mountain Club, got the official list, and began ticking off each mountain they did.

Let the Journey Begin

Since March 2020, father and son have gone hiking about once a month, each time packing 30 to 40 pounds of supplies on their backs. They lug three liters of water a piece, extra layers of clothing, and a water purifier. They tote microspikes for icy spots and a Jetboil camping stove for cooking. A lot of things they bring are for what might happen — first aid supplies in the event of an injury, a small tent and sleeping bag in case they're stranded for the night.

Theobald likens hiking the High Peaks to completing his college degree as an adult, a decision that begins with a commitment to the journey. "Sometimes you want to give up, and

sometimes you doubt yourself," he says. "But you keep going, and at the end, you see what you've accomplished. It's certainly worth the effort to do the climb and get to the top."

Theobald's quest to complete the High Peaks also has an educational component. Each time the duo completed a peak, he donated \$1,000 to a nursing or allied professional scholarship, including several at SUNY Empire State College and one at SUNY Morrisville, where Michael is now in college. "It's our way to support the future of health care," Theobald says. 🍓



Michael and David Theobald on their way to the top of Sawteeth Mountain in November 2021

Did you know?

There are nature trails at two SUNY Empire locations?



Our Rochester location on Westfall Road sits on 4.2 acres and is enhanced by a trail on the perimeter that is open to the college community and the public. The Highland Crossing Trail is a multi-use neighborhood connector trail traveling through the town of Brighton and the city of Rochester. It connects with two regional trail systems, the Erie Canalway Trail in the south and the Genesee Riverway Trail in the northwest. It also winds through numerous parks and places of interest. The trail is used for walking, running, and bicycling.



Timothy Cosgriff '93, director of community events, walks on the trail at the Rochester location.



Our Selden campus, at 407 College Road, is built to high standards for environmental sustainability, and features public nature trails that connect to Suffolk County's comprehensive hiking and biking trail network.



Fishing My Way Through the Pandemic

By John A. Karcher '80



John Karcher '80
with his catch.

Many people have had to get creative dealing with the restrictions and isolation of the pandemic. My situation is a bit different, since I had retired in June 2019. I was still trying to navigate my new life of “freedom” when the pandemic hit. Travel plans had to be curtailed and stay-cations became the new alternative. Fortunately, I live on the water on the south shore of Long Island and have owned a boat for more than 50 years. I always sought isolation and relaxation on the water. The only difference was a bit of resentment since I was being forced to isolate on my boat (poor me)!

Fishing has always been one of my favorite pastimes. I began fishing with my dad and uncle when I was about seven. Although striped bass and blue fish were the most fun, I can still remember hating the smell of the bait — especially on a hot day. As a result, “bottom” fishing (fluke in the summer and flounder in the winter) became my preferred catch as frozen or live bait was a lot easier to deal with even on the hottest day. I will occasionally fish in the Atlantic Ocean on a calm day, but I prefer the Fire Island Inlet and the Great South Bay. The fish are not as plentiful as I remember from years back and size restrictions make it difficult to keep too many fish for the dinner table. But as most fisherman will say “A bad day of fishing is still better than a good day at work!”

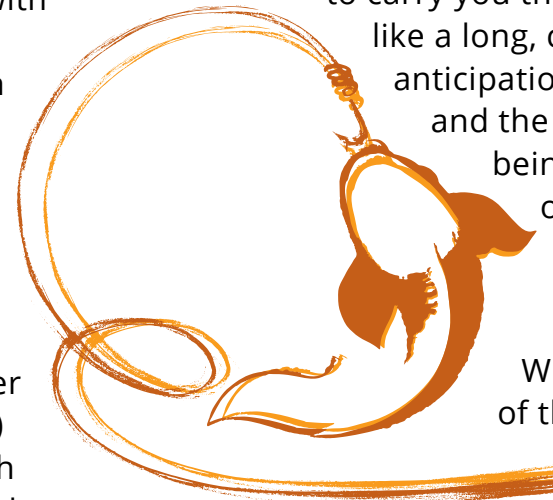
Crabbing for blue claw crabs is another great way to pass the time and here we have several options. We can drift in the boat across shallow water (2-3 feet deep) and scoop the crabs up with a net. This takes practice, first to be able to see the crabs

hiding under patches of seaweed on the bottom, then chasing them as they run away and bury themselves in the sand. This is the most fun and the most sporting way, as the crabs have a pretty good chance of getting away. Another alternative at night is to shine a flashlight on the water. Crabs are attracted to the light, and you just scoop them up with a net. Yet another method is to set traps right off the dock in my backyard. This is great for the kids and even the smallest ones get to catch a crab just by pulling up on the cord attached to the trap.

Unfortunately, the memories of a good summer boating and fishing season have to carry you through what always seems like a long, cold winter. Each year, the anticipation of getting the boat ready and the thought of the coming season being the year I catch the “BIG” one carries me through the winter. Those same thoughts got me through the pandemic.

While trying to make the best of the stay-at-home restrictions, I also began to cook (probably much to my wife’s dismay, though she has been encouraging and supportive). I always enjoyed outdoor grilling, which I do year-round. However last year, I discovered “sous vide” and “air frying,” as I set out to replicate some of my favorite restaurant meals that I could no longer get due to the pandemic.

So, I would have to say the pandemic has not been horrible for us. We’ve been married 47 years and dated for eight years before that. We are very fortunate that we enjoy spending time together and yes, she even enjoys fishing and crabbing — as long as I don’t stay out too long. 🍷



SUNY EMPIRE ALUMNI, WORKING AND PLAYING OUTSIDE



Ashley Caldwell '14, won Olympic gold last winter in Beijing in the mixed team aericals, a skiing competition that debuted there.



Chris Duffy '19, a journeyman, working on a rooftop in New York City's Chelsea neighborhood.



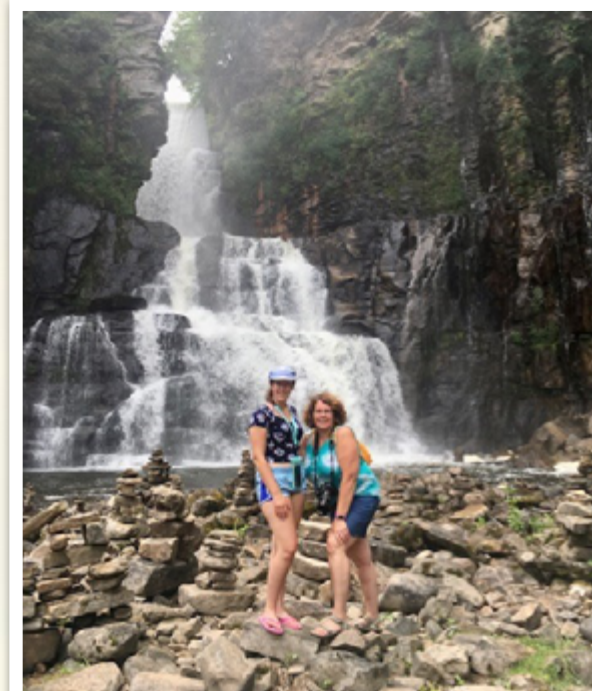
John Kane '17 and his son Owen, as they prepare to go scuba diving.



"Summer Fun" by Eugenia D'Ambrosio '05, who works as a freelance photographer and writer.



Robert and Friedhilde Milburn '74, sailing on their boat on in the Long Island Sound.



Heather Gaebel '21 with her daughter Amanda, hiking at High Falls Park in Chateaugay, NY.



Jeff Olson '94 and his wife, Margo, in Glacier National Park in Montana.



Bill Langham '96, membership chair of the Camp Read Association, on a day hike in the Pharaoh Lake Wilderness Area in the Adirondacks.



Kelly DiCarmine '18 '21 with her son Richie Collier, a current SUNY Empire student, and their puppy.

ALUMNI NOTES

1974



Jennifer Manocherian '74 a Broadway and off-Broadway theater producer, is the co-writer of a short musical titled "Cockroaches and Cologne." It streamed on Broadway on Demand last fall and was a finalist in the

streaming platform's Short Film Festival. The 14-minute "quirky romantic musical" can be seen on YouTube.

1976

Lynn Holley '76 was recently featured in Common Reader for her work as the founding director of the International Poetry Film Festival. She has been a curator and art consultant for more than 15 years. Holley is also the founder of the 3 Minute Film Festival, now in its 10th season, which is in its 10th season and the International Fine Arts Film Festival, which is in its fifth season.

1981

Joanne M. Cofrancesco '81, '04 has released a new children's book, "Billy Bunny Goes to Paris." The book tells the story of a bunny inspired to become an artist. The Auburn, NY native has also published her poems in literary journals.

1985

David Shakes '85 received the Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award from the Geva Theatre Center in Rochester, NY. The annual award is presented to individuals and organizations whose art "allows for the expression of truth and beliefs and helps us again an understanding of one another and the world." He is the artistic director of the North Star Players.

1990



Charles Biasiny-Rivera '90's photographs were recently on display at El Museo, a museum in New York City dedicated to preserving the arts and culture

of Puerto Rican and Latin Americans. The exhibit was titled "En Foco: The New York Puerto Rican Experience, 1973-1974," and displays the inaugural portfolio of En Foco, a collective that Rivera helped form in 1974. The collective was devoted to documenting Latino life from the inside. The exhibit was featured in The New York Times.

1992

Martin Zuckerman '92 a former global project manager for information technology infrastructure at Citibank, is the author of a series of mystery books titled "The Darkness at Decker Lake," "The Darkness at Harborfront Village," and "The Darkness at Delancey Street: New York City."

1993

Barbara Garro '93, '96 is the host of "Five Minutes With Jesus," a radio program that airs in New York, Vermont, and Massachusetts. She is the author of eight books and an internationally syndicated business columnist. She is the former director of risk management for Comcast Corp.

1995

Patricia Uttaro '95 director of the Rochester Public Library and Monroe County Library System in New York, organized the 10th anniversary of "Art of the Book & Paper," a juried international exhibit that celebrates art, books, and paper. The show was held in 2021.

Ivan Godfrey '95 Ph.D., an associate professor of criminal justice at SUNY Ulster Community College and adjunct professor at the University at Albany School of Social Welfare, has published his first book, "Corrections and Beyond: My Story of Doing Time on the Other Side of the Bars." The book is about his career as an African American corrections officer and his path to becoming a forensic psychologist with the New York State Office of Mental Health.

1997

Oleg A. Gostomelsky '97 was appointed vice chairman of the Indiana District Export Council. He is the vice president of international operations for Mursix Corp. and has more than 20 years of international business experience.

John "Jay" Jonas '97, the deputy chief and division commander of Division 7 of the New York City Fire Department, writes the

Division 7 Training and Safety Newsletter. The October-November 2021 issue contains a story about the January 1975 bombing of the Fraunces Tavern in lower Manhattan.

1998

Donald L. Johnson '98 is the author of "This Far by Grace: The Incredible Story of One Man's Journey Out of Darkness Into God's Marvelous Light." He is a retired probation officer and the founder of Lifeline Ministries International in Dawsonville, GA.

1999



Evelyn Buchanan '99 has joined Cal State East Bay in Hayward, CA, as the vice president for university advancement. She was most

recently the associate vice president of development and campaign manager at Chico State. She has more than 25 years of experience in advancement programs at Carthage College and Franklin Pierce University. While at SUNY Empire, she was the vice president of external affairs.

Leah Margolis '99 has published "To Bury the Cloud," a novel about a woman coming to terms with a difficult childhood. She lives in Brooklyn.

2004

Erika J Leveillee '04 is the co-author of Chapter 7 in the textbook, "Preventing Child Abuse: Critical Roles and Multiple Perspectives." Her chapter was on "Home Visiting to Prevent Maltreatment."

2006

Michell Wright Jumpp '06 was recently named the New York Library Association's School Librarian of the Year. Michell is the School Library Media Specialist at Horizons on the Hudson's elementary school in the Newburgh, New York City School District. The award is given to a librarian who has demonstrated extraordinary leadership and service within the library community over the past 12 to 18 months. After receiving the award Wright Jumpp was contacted by a producer from NBC's Today Show. Host Jenna Bush Hager visited Wright Jumpp's school for an interview and library tour. Wright Jumpp appeared live on the Plaza in March with Jenna and the other anchors to promote literacy.

Robert F. Koenig '06 is a musician and writer on popular culture. During his time at SUNY Empire, he was interviewed by The New York Times for his work on the music for Levittown, NY's 60th anniversary. To mark the 75th anniversary of Levittown in 2022, Bob's producers, Chrome Orange Music, reissued the songs, plus a new track, "Happy Anniversary, Levittown." Levittown, NY, is considered the father of modern suburbia in the U.S. Koenig also received the 2022 SCOPE Community Service award from the Levittown School District Board of Education.

Willie J. Lightfoot '06 was re-elected to the Rochester City Council last November in Rochester, NY.

Thomas J. Richardson '06 has retired as Fire Department of New York chief after 41 years on the job. City officials, firefighters and friends held a ceremony honoring the chief last January. Richardson began as a firefighter in 1980. The last response of his career was among the most tragic, as Richardson raced from his home in Long Island to a five-alarm fire in the Bronx on January 9. The fire left 17 people dead and other victims badly injured. FDNY crews made many rescues during the fire, and many were able to survive thanks to FDNY firefighters and EMTs.

2007

Ann E. Rushlo '07, executive officer of the Mohawk Valley Association of Realtors was honored with the REALTOR® Association Certified Executive designation. The designation comes from the National Association of Realtors and recognizes exceptional efforts made by REALTOR® association executives.

Denton Tillman's '07's photographs of the World Trade Center on 9/11 and the two decades after were recently published in Vanity Fair online. His collection of photographs of downtown New York, taken from his 10th story rooftop terrace and covering more than 20 years, capture the towers from before the tragedy, 30 seconds after the first plane struck the north tower, and throughout that terrible day. He continued taking photos from that vantage point for the next 20 years as the skyline healed and new buildings replaced the devastation. Tillman, a professional photographer for more than 50 years, has also been teaching photography at the Fashion Institute of Technology. He turned 80 this year. He says, "Teaching keeps me young and in touch with young artists."

Christopher Burke '07 is the new executive director for the New York State Preferred Source Program for New Yorkers Who Are Blind (NYSPSP). The program creates and sustains meaningful employment for New Yorkers who are blind or visually impaired. He began his new role in August. Burke has more than 20 years of nonprofit management experience and has held several leadership positions. He joins NYSPSP from Northeastern Association of the Blind at Albany, an NYSPSP-affiliated agency, where he was executive director and chief executive officer, responsible for the agency's overall management, leadership, and vision. In addition, he oversaw the day-to-day operations of the Northeastern Association of the Blind Foundation.

2008

Kimie Romeo '08 won her race for the Irondequoit New York town board. Board members serve four-year terms. Romeo is also the owner of Romeo Realty group and an adjunct professor at RIT.

Cristy Dwyer '08, '09, '13, legislative policy analyst, has been working at the New York City Council for the last 3-1/2 years. She wants people to know that her SUNY Empire graduate studies degree made this dream gig possible.

2009

Mykel Dicus '09 was involved in the production of "Pieces of Us," an award-winning film about the personal journeys of five people whose lives were altered by LGBTQ+ hate crimes. Dicus lives in New York City and is the owner of Flow and Flair, which specializes in artistic expression through guided physical fitness and offers flag dance classes for seniors, people with disabilities, and the public.

Greg Chako '09, jazz artist and composer, is now officially represented by Mint 400 Records, a company that will manage the distribution and promotion of all his music moving forward. Mint 400 Records formally announced his signing to their new jazz label, Raining Music.

2010

Alison L. Bentley '10, '13 earned her second master's degree from Arizona State University in 2021 in communications. She has accepted a position with Southern New Hampshire University. Bentley earned her A.S. in 2010 and a B.A. in 2012 from SUNY Empire. She also holds a Master of Science degree in global technology from Arizona State University.

2011

Addie Marrow '11 has written a new book, "The Trichotomy of a Temporary Office Worker." The book describes a woman's rollercoaster journey as a temporary office worker in today's economy.

2013

Leo Dylewski '13 was selected as chief of police for the City of Peekskill Police Department. Dylewski attended the Westchester County Police Academy and worked for the New York City Department of Environmental Police before he started his career with the City of Peekskill Police Department in 2000.

Kathleen McLean '13 received the YWCA 2021 Resourceful Woman of the Year Award. McLean is president of The McLean Group, a New York State-certified Minority and Women Business Enterprise. The consulting firm partners with organizations to create custom solutions around diversity, equity, inclusion, team building, and leadership development.

She received her bachelor's degree in social work from Buffalo State, a master's degree in social work from University at Albany, and an MBA from SUNY Empire.

2015

Lavie Margolin '15 earned his Master of Arts in Adult Learning from SUNY Empire and is a current student in the Ed.D. program. Margolin runs a foundation program at CUNY that supports 60 top students in paid summer internships with year-long mentoring. The program places students with a network of foundation alumni and has an executive-in-residence who also mentors one day a week.

Jill Remillard '15, '17 has been continuing her education and recently earned a Master of Science degree from the University of Saint Joseph. She would like to thank her SUNY Empire mentor Nadine Fernandez for her support.

2017

Vincent French '17 was named coordinator of equity and inclusivity for the Pittsford New York Central School District. French will work with students, teachers and administrators to promote the district's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

2018

Matthew Kilgore '18 recently began his second season as the tailor for The Drew Barrymore Show at the Viacom CBS Broadcast Center in New York City. Last season, he tailored all of Ms. Barrymore's looks for the show and earned an Emmy nomination for his Glinda costume (worn by Drew) for the Halloween episode.

2020



Nakesha Vines '20 was recently elected secretary to the board of NYS Minorities in Criminal Justice. She would like to give a shout-out to her experience at SUNY Empire that prepared her and continues to

support the work she does at the Fishkill Correctional Facility, where she is a lieutenant.

2021

LaQuet Sharnell Pringle '21 is a recent graduate and a recipient of the Richard Porter Leach Fellowship. She is a longtime Broadway performer, dancer, singer, and actress. Pringle was recently featured in The New York Times for her work as a swing for the Broadway musical "Mrs. Doubtfire".

Jason Juliano '21 has completed an advanced professional certificate in strategic management at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. He was named an International IBM Champion in AI, Cloud Technologies and Blockchain. Juliano published an article in "PECB Insights" on "How Your Organization Can Achieve Expertise and Leadership in the Times of Blockchain and AI." He recently accepted an adjunct instructor position teaching economics at SUNY Rockland Community College.

Alumni Gather for Maple Sugaring Event

In March, SUNY Empire State College alumni and friends gathered in Mumford, NY for a Maple Sugar Festival and tour. The outing started with a meet-and-greet with refreshments and included a tour of the sugarhouse where sap is transformed into maple syrup; a display of techniques and tools used by early settlers; and tales of maple sugaring origins told by storytellers at the Village Square Stage. Some guests also tried their hands at tapping a tree.



SUNY Empire Alumni Meeting Virtually

"Conversations Over Coffee" is a virtual midday coffee break that started during the pandemic.

Each conversation features new speakers and a new topic. All speakers are part of the SUNY Empire community — alumni,

faculty, staff, and students. Topics include alumni stories, current events, career advice, faculty research, interesting hobbies, music, and more.

To learn about upcoming events, or ask a question, please visit the [alumni website](#).



PLEASE SAVE THE DATE: Thursday, August 4, 2022

SUNY Empire State College Day at the Races

Saratoga Race Course, Saratoga Springs, New York

Questions? Contact Kimberly Neher, Director of Alumni Engagement: kimberly.neher@esc.edu

To view the alumni events schedule, visit www.esc.edu/alumni.

If you have an idea for an alumni event in your area, please contact Kimberly Neher, director of alumni engagement, at kimberly.neher@esc.edu.

In Memoriam

This list includes updates on alumni and other members of the SUNY Empire State College community reported by family members, newspapers, and other sources. To submit a name to be included in In Memoriam, please contact alumni@esc.edu.

Virginia D. Acquario '87
Johnnie G. Angus '75
Margaret H. Boehmer '74
Barbara A. Boucher '77
Ruby L. Boykins '03
Dominick J. Dececco
Frank P. Dorchak Jr. '92
Susan D. Drake '92
Miriam A. Friedman '89
Kathy Grimes '10
Jeffrey Guilmette
Elizabeth M. Hart '76
Mary J. Heath '97
Bruce Humphrey '86
Eugene M. Kaczor '76
Marion C. Morse '81
Ella Schroder Nicklas '76
Thomas J. Sawnor '95
William H. Somers '76
David A. Wait
Marilyn J. Whitehead '73
David Whyte '03
Bruce C. Winkelman '81
Linda Zasada '07

Darby Penney '78 died on Oct. 11, 2021, in Albany, NY. Darby was a mental health advocate who worked for the New York State Office of Mental Health and dedicated her life to crusading for better psychiatric care for the mentally ill.

In 2004, she helped to expose the difficult lives of patients at Willard Psychiatric State Hospital in the town of Ovid, NY, in the Finger Lakes with a show at the New York State Museum called "Lost Cases, Recovered Lives: Suitcases From a State Hospital Attic." Objects in the exhibit told the tragic stories of the patients who owned them. The show became a traveling exhibit as well as a book, *The Lives They Left Behind*. It later went to the Museum of Disability History in Buffalo. Darby is predeceased by her husband and survived by her mother, Audrey Penney '85, two sisters, and a brother.

Elizabeth F. Kurtik '87 of Albany, NY, passed away on June 26, 2021, at the age of 88. Elizabeth earned her Bachelor of Science from SUNY Empire in 1976. She was a program manager for the New York State Department of Public Service and Labor Management

in Albany. She also worked as a lab tech at Albany Medical Center. Elizabeth served in the U.S. Air Force from 1958 to 1961 during the Vietnam War.

She was a member of the Civil Service Employees Association and a member of the Cannonaires, a volunteer singing group that traveled to local nursing homes and senior centers. She is the daughter of the late Richard and Elizabeth Fitzpatrick and is survived by her husband Edward, four children, and two grandchildren.

Donald Moran '92 of Binghamton, NY, passed away on July 13, 2021. He was 85. Donald earned his Bachelor of Science from SUNY Empire in 1992. Donald served his community as a former councilman and supervisor in the town of Dickinson and as a county legislator in Broome County.

He loved to ski and was a member of the Greek Peak Ski Patrol for over 40 years. He also enjoyed playing golf and volunteered for many years at both the BC Open and the Dick's Sporting Goods Open. Donald was active in youth

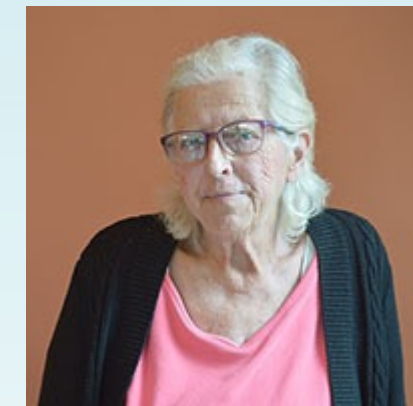
activities as a coach, scout leader, and as a basketball and soccer referee. He was a lifelong member of St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church and longtime member and former president of the Hillcrest Rotary. Donald loved spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren, and he enjoyed watching sporting events, especially Ohio State football, the New York Giants, and the New York Yankees. He is survived by his wife Bonnie Moran, his two daughters and his four grandchildren.

Alberta "Jean" McPhail '01 passed away on February 6, 2022, at Saratoga Hospital following a brief illness. Jean was born in 1945, in Brooklyn, NY. She graduated from Wappinger Falls Central School in 1963 and went on to get a B.S. in business economics from SUNY Empire. She worked as the director of human resources for Verizon for more than 38 years. She also served as a substitute bus driver for Schuylerville Central School, where she enjoyed interacting with students.

Jean was a member of the Saratoga Springs Lions Club, where she was named Lion of the Year and served as club treasurer. In 2005, she transferred to the Greenwich Lions Club, where her husband was also a member. She enjoyed playing golf, camping in Lake Placid, and wintering

in Jekyll Island, GA. She also liked working in her flower garden and spending time with her family. Jean is survived by her husband of 15 years, David McPhail, her son, James, and daughter-in-law, Mary, three grandchildren, and five stepchildren.

Sharon L. Blanchard of Fort Miller, NY, passed away peacefully on Dec. 22, 2021, after a long illness. Sharon was born in Bolton Landing, NY, in 1951. She began her career at the Glens Falls Insurance Company where she worked for 30 years. She then had a second career at SUNY Empire, where she worked in our college bookstore for 15 years until her retirement in 2020.



Sharon loved reading and read thousands of books. She also enjoyed crocheting, sewing, and spending time with her family. Sharon is survived by her two brothers, three children, and two grandchildren.

Mary Jordan, who worked in SUNY Empire's Admissions Office, passed away peacefully at home on Thursday, April 14, 2022. She was 105 years old.

Joseph Francis Cerrone '83, a former fire chief in Westchester County and decorated Navy veteran, died earlier this year. He was 92. Born in Mount Vernon in 1929, Cerrone graduated from Edison Technical and Vocational High School in 1949. He received an associate degree in fire science from Westchester Community College. In 1983, he earned a bachelor's degree in professional studies from SUNY Empire.

Cerrone served two tours in the U.S. Navy and was awarded the World War II Victory Medal, Korean Service Medal, and United Nations Korean Service Medal. He was appointed to the Mount Vernon Fire Department in 1952 and became the chief of the department in 1985. Upon his retirement from the department in 1986, he was appointed director of Fire and Emergency Services at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and served for 10 years until his second retirement in 1996. Cerrone also taught fire science as an adjunct professor at Westchester Community College. He is survived by his brother, two sons, and one grandson.



SUNY EMPIRE

STATE COLLEGE

2 Union Ave.
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-4390