

FALL / WINTER 2012

FOCUS

NTID

National Technical Institute for the Deaf • Rochester Institute of Technology



Creativity Abounds



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U.S. Professor of the Year Dr. Todd Pagano

Dr. Todd Pagano, associate professor and director of the Laboratory Science Technology Program at Rochester Institute of Technology's National Technical Institute for the Deaf, was honored November 15 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., as the 2012 U.S. Professor of the Year. Pagano (center) accepted the award from John Lippincott (left), president of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), and Anthony Bryk, president

of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Pagano was selected from more than 300 nominations, and is the first RIT faculty member to receive the prestigious award. Now in its 23rd year, the award is given annually by CASE and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. It is the only national initiative designed to recognize excellence in undergraduate teaching.

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ABOUT THE COVER

This issue of *FOCUS* highlights some of the innovative and talented artists, designers, actors and photographers that are among RIT/NTID's students, faculty, staff and alumni. Pictured in the center photo are Madeline Martin (left) of Westwood, Mass., and Anna Altman of New Haven, Conn., NTID-supported Bachelor of Fine Arts students in the Glass program in RIT's College of Imaging Arts and Sciences. The remaining photos on the cover are from inside this issue. All of the photos are by staff photographers Mark Benjamin and A. Sue Weisler.

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FOCUS

NTID

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MARK BENJAMIN

Creativity Redefined

RIT President Bill Destler often talks about our university's "unfair advantage"—the synergy created by the unique intersection of left-brain and right-brain thinkers and doers in our campus community that leads to a level of innovation and creativity not found anywhere else.

We at NTID are proud to play a central role in cultivating this unfair advantage. Our students, faculty, staff and alumni are engaged in a host of creative and innovative pursuits that are making a difference in our community and far beyond.

One example is Dr. Todd Pagano, associate professor and director of NTID's Laboratory Science Technology program, who was named U.S. Professor of the

Year for 2012 (see inside front cover and p. 3). Todd is the first faculty member in RIT's history to receive this prestigious national honor.

Another example is ASL-English Interpretation alumna Lydia Callis, who gained national recognition for her work interpreting for New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg during Hurricane Sandy (see the inside back cover).

While our last issue of *FOCUS* showcased some of our amazing left-brain, STEM-related initiatives, this issue highlights some of our outstanding right-brain students, faculty, staff and alumni who are breaking new ground and redefining creativity—from Journalism major Michael Roppolo, who worked as an intern on several television programs for CBS (see p. 4), to Assistant Professor Thomas Warfield, who is collaborating with students as well as faculty in the other colleges of RIT on a performance that combines science, art and technology (see p. 12), to alumna Amber Stanton Zion, who is a graphic designer and actress who has appeared on *CSI: NY* and in Deaf West Theatre productions (see p. 14).

The culture of innovation and creativity that characterizes our campus enriches our students' time here and carries them out into the world as they graduate and pursue successful careers, making a difference in their communities, and leaving their mark on the world.

Dr. Gerard J. Buckley
NTID President
RIT Vice President and Dean

Dr. Todd Pagano Named U.S. Professor of the Year

by Greg Livadas



MARK BELAMINI

Student-Centered Surrounded by his students at a campus-wide reception in NTID's Dyer Arts Center, Dr. Todd Pagano enjoys speakers' remarks honoring his selection as U.S. Professor of the Year.

Dr. Todd Pagano, associate professor and director of NTID's Laboratory Science Technology program, was named "2012 U.S. Professor of the Year" by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Pagano is the first RIT faculty member to receive the prestigious national award, which was presented Nov. 15 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

NTID President Gerry Buckley and NTID Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs Stephen Aldersley as well as Senior Associate RIT Provost Chris Licata and others, including his wife, Susan Smith Pagano, an assistant professor at RIT's Thomas H. Gosnell School of Life Sciences, attended the ceremony.

The U.S. Professors of the Year Awards Program, created in 1981, is the only national initiative specifically designed to recognize excellence in undergraduate teaching and mentoring.

U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer congratulated Pagano the day of his award.

"We need more professors and educators like Todd Pagano," Schumer

said on the Senate floor. "He is a native of Rochester, N.Y., and decided to come home to educate the next generation of New Yorkers and Americans. He has instilled not only a love and passion for science, but he has given hope and direction to students who are deaf or hard of hearing."

Pagano, whose award was in the Master's University and Colleges category, said he is pleased the award has enabled him to talk about the potential of his students.

"It has given me a national platform to talk about things I am passionate about—deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and telling the world these students can become hard-working scientists in the workplace. And they are."

From the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D. C., Congresswoman Louise Slaughter congratulated Pagano and said, "Professor Pagano has made it his personal mission to provide mentorship and opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing students to excel in the field of chemistry. He has championed the advancement of deaf and hard-of-hearing students attending NTID and witnessed the betterment and employment of countless students."

Students graduating from RIT/NTID's Laboratory Science Technology program have a nearly 100 percent employment rate in jobs across the country.

"Knowing my students have acquired knowledge that can make a difference in their lives by helping them obtain a job is truly rewarding," Pagano says.

Pagano credits his success to blending two elements: his joy of teaching deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and his passion for chemistry.

It's not uncommon for Pagano to jump on a table and dance to illustrate the movement of an electron.

"As a teacher, you do everything in your power to convey concepts to help students understand," he says. "I try to have at least one visual example in every single class. I'll mix chemicals together, and they do something, and it leaves the students guessing for a moment why this is happening. And hopefully at the end of the class, they understand why these chemicals reacted in the way they did. Seeing that look of understanding on their faces because of the way you convey an idea brings a great feeling of satisfaction."

Pagano is working on several research projects, and all of his research grants are written to include student involvement. Subjects of his research include access to safe drinking water as a result of a changing climate, tracking carcinogen disposition in the lungs as a function of cigarette smoking and measuring the nutritional value of fruit to see how it impacts the migration patterns of birds.

"I want to keep a healthy balance between teaching and research in my career," Pagano says. "I think students benefit from both aspects to help them learn and succeed in finding careers."

Nelsey Carcamo, a master's student from Kissimmee, Fla., was the first in her family to go to college when she came to RIT/NTID in 2006. She met Pagano on the first day of orientation and immediately switched her career aspirations from math to science.

"He has a powerful way of turning students on to science," she says. "I had found my passion and also found a mentor who would go on to open many doors for me."

Hot Jobs and Cool Co-ops

by Ilene J. Avallone

Current RIT/NTID students interested in gaining meaningful work experience in their major last summer got hands-on opportunities through co-ops

with various employers across the country. Recent RIT/NTID graduates, likewise, were busy starting new jobs. Learn about their experiences—in their own words.

COOPERATIVE WORK EXPERIENCES



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Tachief Shaquille Pollard
Hometown: Willingboro, N.J.
Major: Photojournalism
Co-op Experience: Video Editor/Graphic Designer/Web Encoder, University of California San Diego Moores Cancer Center

“I worked on an outreach project for the deaf community to help improve access to health care and raise the level of cancer education. I edited video footage about cancer awareness and created graphics of the human body for a video. I loved the city and the people that I met, and working in my field.”



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Michael Roppolo
Hometown: Stony Point, N.Y.
Major: Journalism with a minor in American History
Co-op Experience: Intern for 48 Hours and *Crimesider*, CBS News

“I did research for journalists, compiled data for stories, looked for stories on affiliate CBS sites to showcase on the *Crimesider* website and wrote stories for the website. I developed and helped to implement a social media strategy. I got a chance to work in a newsroom and use skills that I learned at RIT, so I felt that I was able to really contribute on my co-op.”



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Gayle Sanchez
Hometown: Miramar, Fla.
Major: Arts & Imaging Studies
Co-op Experience: Graphic Designer and Desktop Publisher, Allstate Insurance Company

“My co-op helped me define the type of environment I want to work in some day. I realized that I’d prefer to work for a company or organization where I can use my creativity in different ways and work on something different every day. And I’d like to work with many different clients because I enjoy working with people.”



A. SUE WEISER

Veronica Raco
Hometown: Grand Rapids, Mich.
Major: Museum Studies
Co-op Experience: Collections Management Assistant, RIT Wallace Library Archives

“My co-op—from beginning to end—was a wonderful educational experience. I learned how to build a resume and search for a co-op with help from the NTID Center on Employment, and while on co-op I got hands-on experience with the entire process of archiving materials. I feel much more confident about looking for a job after graduation.”

HOT JOBS



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Julian Moiwai
Hometown: Durham, N.C.
Major: Advertising and Public Relations
Position/Employer: Social Media Manager, ZVRS

“My responsibilities include social media strategy and content creation across ZVRS’ social media platforms. I work with a team to help identify and develop advertising strategies to meet brand goals. I also improve the social media presence of StratusVideo—our sister company. I enjoy the excitement of creativity on the Web, and the task to keep it consistent is challenging.”



MARK BENJAMIN

Dylan Heuer
Hometown: Des Moines, Iowa
Major: Visual Media
Position/Employer: Assistant Photo Editor, MLB.com

“During a game day, the team photographers upload photos of the games to Getty Images or AP Images, and I do a quick edit on the photos and then upload them to the MLB.com Web gallery in nearly real time. What I enjoy most about my job is putting the photos together to create a story of how the game happened and getting to watch as many games as I can and get paid for it!”



MARK BENJAMIN

Greg Pollock
Hometown: Pittsburgh, Pa.
Major: Professional and Technical Communication
Position/Employer: Public Affairs Communications Specialist, Dow Chemical

“My co-op experience at Dow Chemical’s Business Services Group turned into a job offer before I even graduated. I assist in providing support for Dow’s communications with employees, the news media, advocacy groups and the general public. Working for a Fortune 500 corporation is exhilarating. I have a really awesome job. It isn’t easy, but no one ever said that awesome jobs were easy.”



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Elizabeth Williams
Hometown: Durham, N.C.
Major: Hospitality and Service Management/International Hospitality and Tourism Management
Position/Employer: Quality Assurance Manager, Marriott at Penn Square

“I’m responsible for the quality of the guest rooms at the hotel. I enjoy coming up with new ways to make our guests’ stays more pleasant and memorable. I like the feeling that I’ve made a difference by giving guests something positive to look back on about their stay.”

Finding a Creative Home

by Kathy A. Johncox

Since NTID began offering national outreach competitions for middle and high school students in 2006, the competitions have introduced deaf and hard-of-hearing students to RIT/NTID and allowed them to visit campus, experience different career areas, meet new friends and learn about the relationship between college and a successful future.

Two of these competitions, the Digital Arts, Film and Animation Competition and the SpiRIT Writing Contest, have been responsible for leading a number of students to enroll in RIT programs in the fields they love.

“The Digital Arts, Film and Animation Competition helped me find out who I am,” says Matthew Stephens, from Detroit, Mich., who now is a first-year RIT/NTID Graphic Design major. He won first place in the 2010 competition with his film, *Midnight Stroll*.

“Being at RIT has given me new experiences in the arts and helped me to find my strengths as an artist,” he says. “The exposure to the arts here made me fall in love with them even more.”

“When I won the Digital Arts, Film and Animation Competition, it made me realize there was something I was good at doing,” says Samantha Shupe, from Richmond, Va., who now is a third-year Graphic Design major.

In 2009, she won first place with her mixed digital media offering, *Sweet Summer Garden*.

“I could see myself doing something in the arts, like being a designer for a company,” she says. “But after my experience tutoring other students at RIT, I’m considering getting a teaching degree in the arts.”

Kathryn Mills, a Photography major from Cincinnati, Ohio, came to RIT/NTID for the Explore Your Future Program and submitted a story in the 2007 SpiRIT Writing Contest about her experience.

“My summer at EYF lead me to write a story about my wonderful experiences

for the writing contest,” she says.

Mills completed her associate degree in Arts & Imaging Studies and now is earning a bachelor’s degree in Photography.

“Participating in the writing contest made me realize how I had my heart set on RIT/NTID based on the experiences I had before I even enrolled here,” she says. “I enjoy my classes, taking pictures and meeting new people.”

These students are three of more than 500 who have used their creative, right-brained interests to enter NTID outreach competitions since the programs began. Some have won cash prizes and visits to campus, but perhaps more importantly, many have found the confidence to take the next step on their educational journey.



Matthew Stephens

MARK BENJAMIN



Samantha Shupe

MARK BENJAMIN



Kathryn Mills

MARK BENJAMIN

A Right-brain Thinker and Doer

by Ilene J. Avallone



NAME
Lauren Aggen

HOMETOWN
Algonquin, Ill.

MAJOR
Associate+Bachelor's Degree:
A.S., Applied Liberal Studies, 2011
B.S., Multidisciplinary Studies,
concentrations in Creative
Writing, Communication,
Psychology and Deaf
Studies, expected 2014

Meet actor, author, dancer and organ donation advocate Lauren Aggen, who says that embracing her dominant right-brain thinking skills has been a key to her success at RIT/NTID. Lauren's journey at RIT/NTID has been full of adventures and opportunities—from publishing her autobiography to landing leading roles in theater productions. Join us for an insider's view on a typical week in her life at RIT/NTID.



Lauren presents her inspirational life story as a heart transplant recipient to her peers in the class "Death & Dying," an elective course she chose as part of her concentration in Psychology. Her presentation covers the fears, challenges and successes of her life as an organ recipient. Lauren received a heart transplant at eight days old because she was born with a rare congenital heart defect. She chronicles her life as a heart transplant patient in her autobiography, *Austin's Gift: The Life of a Grateful Organ Recipient*.



Lauren spends about 13 hours per week for six weeks in rehearsals to practice her role as Aunt Martha in RIT/NTID's theater production of the dark comedy classic, *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Her devotion to the performing arts at RIT/NTID is remarkable. This is the fifth play that Lauren has performed in on campus.



TIMOTHY HOLMES

LEFT: Cheering on the Tigers! Lauren attends RIT's Brick City Homecoming men's hockey game at Rochester's Blue Cross Arena to cheer on the Tigers as they play Penn State. Dressed in orange and brown, she was one of a record-breaking crowd of more than 10,000 Tigers fans to attend the homecoming event. Standing left to right with new friends from RIT/NTID's sign language interpreting exchange program with Holland: Cornelia van Dijk, Lieke Visser, Aggen, Jeffery Boekestijn and Jesper Lamme.

BELOW: An orientation assistant for RIT/NTID's New Signers Program, Lauren meets frequently with the group of first-year students who attended the program to learn basic sign language skills before the academic year began. Standing left to right practicing the ASL sign "to vote": Aggen, John Heffernan, Elissa Patrick, Brianna Nartowt, Alec Satterly, Steven Murdy, Eric Winnie, Cecilia Grugan, David Tawill, Thomas Dunsmore and Taylor Repetski.

MARK BENJAMIN



MARK BENJAMIN

ABOVE: Working weekly in NTID's costume shop, Lauren tailors a costume for display in the NTID Theater History Exhibit that features costumes, photos, displays and posters from four decades of RIT/NTID performances.

MARK BENJAMIN



"The arts, whether it's visual, dance, creative writing or theater, can expand your imagination and ways of thinking."
—Lauren Aggen



MARK BENJAMIN

ABOVE: Lauren meets with Michael Sarnowski, visiting assistant professor in RIT's English Department, to get help with a poetry assignment for her class "Worlds of Writing," a course required for her concentration in Creative Writing.

LEFT: In her spare time Lauren enjoys making fleece blankets for children and adults in need. She donates her blankets to her local church or Project Linus, a non-profit organization that collects and distributes homemade blankets to children in hospitals, shelters and social service agencies.



Corey Burton

by Ilene J. Avallone



A. SUE WEISLER

NTID Student Congress President Corey Burton, 22, and his vice president chose the slogan, “Don’t be Afraid to Dream” as NSC’s motto for the academic year, and these are words that the Fort Wayne, Ind., native lives by as well.

Burton chose RIT/NTID because of the diversity of both deaf and hearing people on campus, and because he wanted opportunities for new experiences and to socialize with new people.

Burton received an associate degree in Applied Computer Technology and now is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Multidisciplinary Studies with concentrations in Quality Management, Organizational Change and Leadership and Communication.

“I chose this major because it allowed me to combine my interests and goals into one major,” he says. “Customizing my major allowed me to pick a wide variety of courses within each subject and develop my interests in certain areas. I apply many of the concepts I learn in class to my leadership roles at NTID.”

Burton enjoys working with all types of people, so he stays involved at RIT/NTID. He spends about 20 hours a week serving in his role as NSC president.

“I’m growing and learning so much from this leadership role,” he says.

Burton also served as president of Ebony Club and Tiger Media, a film club; was a mentor for the NTID Student Life Team; and an orientation assistant for NTID’s Summer Vestibule Program, a two-week orientation program for new students.

“I find campus life at RIT very rewarding and fulfilling,” he says.

Burton loves adventure. He is a certified scuba diver, likes hiking, traveling to exotic places, and has near-term goals to sky dive and visit Africa to work with young people.

After completing his bachelor’s degree, Burton plans to give back to the community and work for a few years in student life at a deaf school, so he can continue to work with young people and help empower them. He also is considering pursuing a master’s degree in higher education leadership.

Skip Flanagan

by Ilene J. Avallone



A. SUE WEISLER

Skip Flanagan knows baseball. He played as a youngster, got more serious in middle school and played two years of varsity baseball in a mainstream high school where he was the only deaf student. There he won numerous awards, including the 2011 Boston Glove All Scholastic and the 2011 Eastern Athletic All-Star awards. He met with recruiters from several colleges and chose RIT for its strong academic program, diverse student body and deaf-friendly culture. Being recruited by RIT to play the game he loves didn’t hurt.

Flanagan, a second-year Psychology major from Framingham, Mass., has serious plans to combine that major with baseball and other sports in the future.

“My family is full of hard-working, goal-driven people, and their work ethic inspired me to work hard to make my dreams come true,” he says. “I would like to go into sports psychology and work with athletes. I’m not a cubicle guy, and I want to apply my education to something I love. I’d like

to open an athletic training complex to help athletes strengthen their bodies and minds for the rigors of their lifestyle.”

Flanagan enjoys his studies and appreciates the opportunity RIT offers for students to develop their ideas.

“The people at RIT want you to succeed, and they care about your development,” he says. “The sense of community here is unbelievable and a rare thing to find.”

Flanagan says friends would describe him as hard-working, but he does enjoy having downtime when he can read, draw cartoons or do something physical. He has struck a good balance at RIT. During his first year he made the Dean’s List, and he struck out 10 batters against Union College in one of the best games of his career. This year he’ll be studying hard, pitching and playing first base. His goals for the upcoming season?

“Just to play better than last year,” he says.

Maryam Hussein

by Kathy A. Johncox

Maryam Hussein is a busy person. In addition to being a part of the Masquer's Drama Club, Circle K International Club, Tiger Media and NTID Student Congress, the second-year student loves studying and working in her major—Arts & Imaging Studies, with a concentration in Graphic Design.

Rochester is a long way from Hussein's hometown of Chicago, but she's happy to be at RIT where she can show what she is capable of and prove to herself and her family that she can be successful and independent.

Hussein, 20, was diagnosed with spondylolysis, a rare disease involving vertebrae in the back, when she was in 6th grade. She uses a wheelchair, and doesn't let that stop her from enjoying all RIT has to offer. With her ready smile and penchant for drama and the color purple, it's easy to see why the Masquer's Club was one of the groups that attracted her attention.

RIT/NTID's Arts & Imaging Studies Department offers her new things to learn every day—some of which are challenging, and that's fine with her.

"I picked that major because art and graphic design are what I love to do," says Hussein. "Working on artistic projects motivates me, and I hope to develop my skills for a job in this field in the future."

While she's not certain what kind of job she would like, she plans to get her associate degree and then pursue a bachelor's degree.

"Nothing can stop me," she says. "People think that a wheelchair would be in my way, but to me it is not a wheelchair. It's what I need to be strong and get to whatever goals I have in my life."

"If I had to pick one word to describe RIT, I would choose 'Wow,'" she says.

And the RIT community might say the same about her.



A. SUE WEISLER

Janet West

by Ilene J. Avallone

When Janet West, a second-year student from Morgantown, W.Va., began as a Graphic Design major at RIT, she found criticism of her work, normal for that course of study, so terrifying that she changed her major and graduated in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in Business instead. But after working nearly two years as a 401k compliance specialist for the U.S. Department of Labor, West realized that art is still what she is most passionate about, so she reenrolled at RIT to chase her dream.

"I used to take the criticism of my work personally, but now I use feedback more constructively to improve my skills," she says. "This time around I'm less anxious about 'getting it wrong' and more open to exploring new ideas."

West says her professors challenge her to think more creatively every day. "Their lessons have helped me enhance my design skills and boost my confidence. I apply that now to everything I do," she says.

Her passion for art extends to dancing and acting, and she has performed with the

RIT/NTID Dance Company and NTID Performing Arts. This spring she will be a member of the cast of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

West also keeps busy as a member of Ruby's Women Bible Study group at RIT and Hands of Fire, a deaf Christian club. She also is a Resident Advisor.

"What I like best about RIT and the Rochester community is the deaf-friendly environment," she says. "Communication is easy here—both on and off campus—and that is very important to me."

As one of seven children in a hearing family, West credits her mother with contributing to her success. "I am a twin, and my mother always said I could do everything my sister could. She never let me use my deafness as an excuse for anything," she says.

"Don't give up on your dreams" is what West would say to new students at RIT/NTID, and it's how she chooses to live her life. Her goals are to work as a graphic designer for Forever 21 or another apparel company, and someday open her own T-shirt business.



A. SUE WEISLER

A Rich Creative History

by Kathy A. Johncox

What began as an idea for an extracurricular activity 42 years ago, with hard work by NTID students, faculty and staff, has evolved into a full-fledged performing arts program that produces six plays and an outreach tour each year. Because of the creative and dedicated individuals who have been the producers, directors, stage managers, costume designers and actors, the show has gone on.

The idea for a drama club at NTID began in fall 1969 when Robert Panara, RIT's first deaf faculty member, invited his friend and former student Bernard Bragg of the National Theatre of the Deaf to visit campus. Bragg agreed to give a workshop in mime and dramatic monologues that resulted in students being invited to go on stage with their own original works during their performance the following evening.

"The popularity of these acts led to a discussion about forming a drama club," says Panara. "In early 1970, the Drama Club was established, and within months of its creation, half the student body had joined!"

D. Robert Frisina, NTID's first director, envisioned a theater that would enrich the lives of deaf and hard-of-hearing students as well as bring students, faculty and staff closer to each other and to the Rochester community.

By the late 1970s the NTID drama program was receiving awards like Best Play at the New York Theatre Festival in 1978 and selection as a finalist in the



Where It All Began The first drama club officers are shown here in 1970. Left to right: Freddie Gravatt, business manager; George Payne, secretary; Guy Wonder, president; Michael Deninger, advisor; Robert Panara, advisor; Loy Golladay, advisor; Kevin Nolan, treasurer; and Charles Baird, vice president.

American College Theater Festival in 1977, 1979 and 1986.

In 1978, Sunshine and Company, an acting troupe from NTID, which included a musical group, performed for the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf's national convention. People from all over the country contacted NTID and requested performances. It became apparent to Bruce Halverson, NTID Performing Arts chairperson at the time, that a full-time professional company was needed. The name was changed to Sunshine Too!, and it became a popular outreach program, comprising three deaf and three hearing actors travelling the country with a van and a trailer full of sets and props. In the

first year, Sunshine Too! did 259 performances and 433 workshops for nearly 70,000 individuals. It went on to be featured in magazines and journals, win citations and awards, and appeared in a featured spot on *CBS Sunday Morning* with Charles Kuralt. In its 19-year history, the program visited 48 states and Europe, offering more than 12,500 performances to more than 1.3 million people.

The Drama Club also created the Experimental Education Theatre, which integrated productions with literature classes to help students comprehend some of the subtleties of the material and to help students develop poise and self-confidence.

MEMORIES

"Students got the valuable opportunity to understand other people's lives and feelings by becoming their characters. To leave their everyday personae and inhabit another character can be empowering and liberating." —Matthew Moore, SVP '77, founder and president, MSM Productions, Ltd., DEAF.com, and publisher of *Deaf Life*

"Seeing the effect of their child's performance on parents whose stated worst fear was that their deaf or hard-of-hearing child wouldn't have a place in the world. Seeing their child perform brilliantly with confidence and strength, they believe, really believe that their child can do anything he or she wants to do." —Luane Davis Haggerty, instructional support faculty, NTID Cultural and Creative Studies

"One particular memory for me was during a production of *Oz* in 1994. The cast wasn't interacting the way I would have liked, but before I could intervene, four of the dancers, both deaf and hearing, addressed the group explaining that this was more than rehearsing a show, it was becoming a family and that meant that we needed to care for each other. I believe one of the lessons they learned was that the 'magic' of theater is really recognizing their own capacity to love one another." —Thomas Warfield, assistant professor, NTID Cultural and Creative Studies



ARCHIVE PHOTO



ARCHIVE PHOTO



ARCHIVE PHOTO

TOP LEFT: Left to right: Jim Orr, Bob Barrett, Mary Beth Barber-Mothersell and Willy Conley star in *Everyman*, a 1981 production by Bruce Halveron and Jerome Cushman.

BOTTOM LEFT: *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* used a high-tech horse puppet prop.

RIGHT: First season—Poster for *Footlight Fever*, a production that featured a variety of skits, songs, ballads, haiku and a one-act play.

In 1987, the RIT Dance Company was expanded and added dance and creative movement classes for deaf and hard-of-hearing students as a way to teach discipline, self-confidence and commitment.

In the 1990s, the performing arts program became increasingly sophisticated in the use of theatrical techniques and technology. Experimental productions of *Cinderella* in 1995 and *Picnic* in 1996 used subtitle captioning, ASL with environmental sound, and high-tech lighting. Stage management became the responsibility of the students, further developing their skills.

Finding A Home Onstage: A History of NTID's Theater Community, a recent exhibit in the Dyer Arts Center, featured The NTID Performing Arts Program Hall of Fame with more than 100 alumni who have been or are employed in theater, television, movies and

commercials. Many would credit their early exposure to theater at RIT/NTID for giving them the self-esteem that would carry them on to work in the field they love.

For example, alumni Amber Stanton Zion, Antilla Z and Mike Spady currently are Actor's Equity and Screen Actors' Guild members. Mary Beth Barber-Mothersell became involved in professional theater, stage, television and commercials, had a guest role in the television show, *MacGyver*, and traveled with a touring company of *Children of a Lesser God*.

Performing arts scholarships were established during this period providing financial assistance for students to attend RIT/NTID.

"The Drama Club may have started in 1970, but an evolution began in 1974 when we finally got our own building and our own theater," says Panara. "It

enabled us to increase staff, to have a workshop where we could build sets and stage full-length plays and musical dramas. The end result is the present NTID Performing Arts program."

"NTID Drama Club's Award Night. It was like the Academy Awards," says Panara. "Students substituted Levis for tuxes and evening gowns, received Best Actor/Actress awards and showed off specially designed sets they had built. They were nights and stars to remember and cherish forever."

ONLINE EXTRAS:

Video: Interview with Jim Orr, NTID Cultural and Creative Studies, at www.bit.ly/JimOrr
Photo Gallery: www.bit.ly/Vj5BjD

**FOCUS* acknowledges Harry G. Lang and Karen K. Conner's *From Dream to Reality*, (2001) for historical information in this article.

"It's the moment when you see a student really light up, when you see the student filled with a sense of wonder, self-esteem and magic." —Jim Orr, community relations coordinator, NTID Cultural and Creative Studies (retired)

"The program was very empowering and a safe place to take risks. It was a place where we all were able to come together and create theater regardless of our background." —Mary Beth Barber-Mothersell, alumna, New York Relay customer relations manager III, Sprint

"At times it could be a frustrating process, but when a production opened, I sat back in the audience, and I wondered who had pushed the magic button. I love that sparkling moment when it all comes together." —Patrick Graybill, RIT/NTID associate professor (retired)

"Theater is a collaborative art. I have had the opportunity not only to work with student actors on their relationship with each other as performers and as characters, but also with brilliant designers who humbly work in the shadows and teach students—and all of us—the meaning of teamwork, discipline and commitment." —Bonnie Meath-Lang, professor emeritus, artistic director of NTID Performing Arts Program (retired)

AstroDance Blends Science, Art and Technology

by Greg Livadas

Through the use of dance and multimedia theater techniques, choreographer Thomas Warfield, assistant professor in NTID's Cultural and Creative Studies Department, has created an aesthetic, educational performance representing the merger of black holes and the gravitational pull of particles in the universe with a show called *AstroDance*.

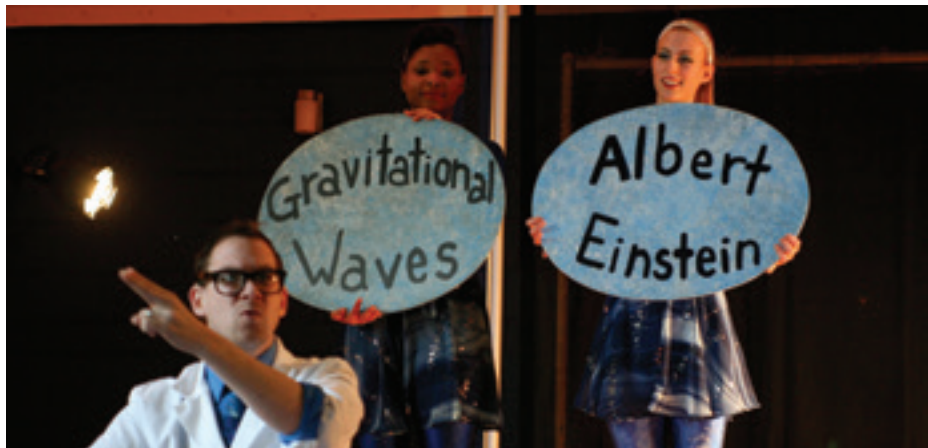
This project, funded by the National Science Foundation, provides deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing audiences with general information and basic concepts from the fields of gravitational physics and astrophysics while engaging them in a theatrical experience.

AstroDance is a joint project of NTID's Performing Arts program, RIT's College of Science and RIT's B. Thomas Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences.

The innovative performance features a cast of both deaf and hearing dancers against a backdrop of animated galactic imagery produced by RIT physicist Dr. Hans-Peter Bischof, and theatrical setting by NTID faculty member Erin Auble. Its development can be traced to



Science in Motion Members of *AstroDance*, a collaboration between NTID, RIT's College of Science and RIT's B. Thomas Golisano College of Computing and Information Services, include (back row, left to right): Leen Massillon, Joseph Fox, Jarlisa Corbett, Thomas Warfield, Nicole Hood and (front row): Antonietta Alfano, Erin Auble, Andrea Mariani.



Taking the Show on the Road Members of *AstroDance*, (left to right) Joseph Fox, Jarlisa Corbett and Andrea Mariani, perform at Scranton (Pa.) School for Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing Children. The dance company plans to perform in several cities this year.

the mid-1990s when Warfield was in California working on a project with the late astronomer Carl Sagan, and more recently when he attended a conference in New York City where he saw projects that mixed art and science with music and theater. He thought dance could have been involved, so together with RIT astrophysicist Manuela Campanelli and a host of other RIT scientists and artists, *AstroDance* was born.

"This project is an example of how you can put the right and left brain together and promote science that goes across boundaries," Campanelli says. "What I hope audiences will come away with is the understanding of the scientific harmony in the universe, and how the laws of physics work. We want to communicate how science works to the general public. And one way to do this is to stimulate emotions through spectacular visual effects that use state-of-the-art computer simulations."

AstroDance premiered last fall at the inaugural First Niagara Rochester Fringe Festival to rave reviews and a sold-out house.

"Our idea is to engage the general public in thinking about science from a different perspective," Warfield says.

"In science and math, it's a very cerebral process. In the areas of dance, movement and the arts, there's the added emotional, sensory experience. Bring them together and you'll see science from a different perspective. We're hoping to open areas of understanding science in a broader context."

The show will be touring throughout the northeast United States with particular emphasis on mixed audiences of children in grades 5 to 12. The experience is highly visual and fully accessible to deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing audience members, and will inform, educate and entertain all members of the audience.

"It has been a joyful experience to communicate with artists, which is a different culture than the scientific world, which emphasizes rigor and results," Campanelli says. "The arts emphasize beauty and harmony. I'm very excited to work with both groups."

ONLINE EXTRAS:

For more information, visit astrodance.rit.edu.

Video: Interview with Thomas Warfield, www.bit.ly/VkRPwM.

Wining and Dining Guests a Winning Recipe for Hospitality Students

by Greg Livadas



In the Kitchen RIT/NTID students Rachella Shephard, a Hospitality and Tourism Management major (in photo at left); and Chetan Mishra, a Hotel Management major (in photo at right), prepare some of the food for RIT's annual "Puttin' on the RITz" dinner.

Each spring for the past 27 years, students have donned white coats and reported to a kitchen rather than a classroom laboratory for the "Puttin' on the RITz" dinner planning course in RIT's School of International Hospitality & Service Innovation.

The RITz is an annual formal dinner to raise funds for the hospitality program. Students taking the class are involved in every aspect of the dinner's planning and production, including public relations and advertising.

Many of the students are earning degrees in hospitality, but others, like RIT/NTID student Claire Scanlon, a marketing major from Bethany, Conn., took the class simply because she likes to cook.

"I'm learning a lot about fine dining," she said as she made hors d'ouerves for the event.

Scanlon was one of 22 RIT/NTID students who took the class—the largest number of deaf and hard-of-hearing students to enroll in the class, according to Mark Pfuntner, an instructor in NTID's Business Studies Department.

"I encouraged them, as it helps in terms

of their career development," he says. "For business or hospitality students, if they have career aspirations of being an event planner, this is the perfect class for them. It also helps in learning to interact with their peers who share similar interests. And word gets around about how much fun this class is, and they get to earn credit at the same time."

The course culminated with a \$125-a-plate dinner, held at Penfield Country Club, which sold out with 230 guests who enjoyed a seven-course gourmet meal.

Days before the big event, Rachella Shephard, a Hospitality and Tourism Management major from Frederick, Md., was in the practice kitchen, collecting ingredients to make petit fours.

At the dinner, students served guests, cleared tables and washed dishes. They were taught in advance the proper way to greet and serve guests, and how to present and pour wine.

"As soon as the night starts, you're on stage," says Rick Lagiewski, a Hospitality and Tourism Management Department faculty member. "You're at a formal event. Some tables will be quiet, some will be

wild. Some will expect you to be part of their party and some will have potential donors to be entertained."

Chetan Mishra, a Hotel Management major from Whitehouse Station, N.J., spent much of his prep time carving radishes. During the dinner, he worked as a chef. He plans to use his skills helping his family run their motel and liquor store, or finding a career in the hospitality field.

Bryan Eisenmann, a Business major from Tabernacle, N.J., worked as a waiter.

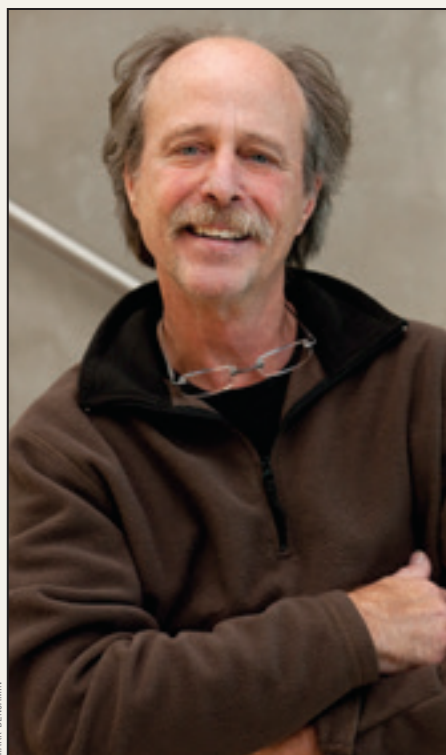
"I took this course to gain experience and build my resume," he says. "It was a lot of fun and a great way to meet people. I'd recommend this class in a heartbeat!"

Shephard also enjoyed the class and knows she'll use what she learned in the future.

"I'm hoping to do event planning for corporations, deaf-owned businesses, resorts, catering businesses or travel agencies," she says. "Event planning is something I love to do. I like managing pressure situations and making events successful. And when the event is happening, I like to watch as things unfold and give myself a pat on the back."

Ronald Trumble

by Susan L. Murad



MARK BENJAMIN

Renaissance man. Noun: A person with many talents or interests, especially in the humanities.

The term above might well define RIT/NTID alumnus Ronald Trumble, SVP '70, '77, '79.

Born in Asheville, N.C., Trumble's family moved to Jacksonville Beach, Fla., when he was 2 1/2—around the time that his grandmother discovered he was deaf.

"I was raised orally and learned some ASL when I attended the Deaf Olympics in swimming in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1969," he says. "There, I met a teammate who attended RIT/NTID."

Learning RIT/NTID had an Architectural Technology program, he applied.

"I had been interested in architecture since I was young, and taught myself drafting in high school," he says.

Trumble discovered the Fine Arts Woodworking and Furniture Design program while exploring the RIT campus during the Summer Vestibule Program.

"I saw a student show in Bevier Gallery, and was thrilled that there was a furniture

program at RIT," he says. "I enjoyed woodworking with my father, and I liked to design and build furniture."

After completing the Architectural Technology program, he attended RIT's School for American Crafts in the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences and focused on woodworking and furniture design.

Another area of interest for Trumble was the NTID Performing Arts program. It appears to be in his genes—his mother majored in theater, and daughter Maddie is touring with the national company of *Mary Poppins* in the title role.

"I was shy in high school," he says. "But I came to life in the theater program."

He also appeared in the New York City production of *Children of a Lesser God*.

Today, Trumble is part of an artists' cooperative in Berkley Calif., where he lives with his wife and children. This renaissance man's advice to students: "Follow your heart. Your destiny will come from what interests you. Discover all that RIT/NTID has to offer and GO FOR IT!"

Amber Stanton Zion

by Susan L. Murad



PROVIDED PHOTO

When she was young, Amber Stanton Zion would tell herself to "keep going until you reach the stars." The Penn Hills, Pa., native has done exactly that, living and working in the Los Angeles area as an actress, appearing on television's *CSI:NY*, a national Kay Jewelers commercial and on stage in numerous Deaf West Theatre productions.

Before graduating from Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, Zion and her parents attended NTID's open house and liked what they saw.

"RIT/NTID has the best programs in Graphic Design, and they also have Performing Arts courses," she says. "I've been acting since the age of 5 and always have been interested in graphic arts, too."

She decided to focus on her coursework at RIT/NTID before becoming involved with NTID Performing Arts, first in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. She performed in numerous productions throughout her college career.

"My professors prepared me for a great future, and I am forever grateful for that,"

she says. "Professors Bonnie Meath-Lang and Jim Orr sent us to New York City to audition for Deaf West Theatre's *Big River*, and it was the most exciting experience.

"After making a few films with some friends' production company, I realized that if I wanted to become a professional actress, I needed to be in Los Angeles—so here I am!"

She lives in West Hollywood with her husband, RIT/NTID alumnus Ari Zion.

Zion's most recent project is *Ice Age 4: Continental Drift*, where she will interpret the movie along with fellow deaf actor Sean Berdy. She continues to work on new projects such as *It's My Role*, co-produced by RIT/NTID student Joseph Ausiano. She also works full time as a graphic designer.

"Becoming an actor takes lot of time and patience," she says. "My advice for anyone interested in becoming a performer is to continue to get involved with theater productions, student films or work on your own projects. A great headshot with good resume and reel are a must."

Rosica Hall

by Susan L. Murad



Creating an Innovative Space Construction continues on Sebastian and Lenore Rosica Hall, slated to open in October.

Construction of Sebastian and Lenore Rosica Hall, which began in June 2012, is proceeding ahead of schedule. The building now is fully enclosed and is connected to all utilities and heat. Work through the winter months will shift to the building interior. A live web cam allows viewing of the construction, and can be found at www.ntid.rit.edu/rosica-hall/livecam.

The ribbon cutting ceremony has been scheduled for Friday, October 11, as part of Brick City Homecoming and NTID's 45th Anniversary Reunion. All alumni, parents, students, faculty, staff, friends and donors to the facility will be invited to participate in this event, which will feature student-led tours and demonstrations of student and faculty research and new product development projects. It is expected Sebastian and Lenore Rosica Hall will be fully occupied by the beginning of fall semester 2013.

The William Randolph Hearst Foundations has granted RIT/NTID \$150,000 to help fund construction of Sebastian and Lenore Rosica Hall. In recognition of the foundation's support, the second floor innovation and

entrepreneur's laboratory will be named "The Hearst Foundations Imaginarium." This will be the largest laboratory space within Rosica Hall.

"RIT/NTID and the Hearst Foundations have enjoyed a long and valued partnership," says NTID President Gerry Buckley. "Through its generosity, the Hearst Foundations once again have shown their belief in our students and in helping them achieve their education and career goals. We look forward to the innovation and cross-disciplinary partnerships that will develop in The Hearst Foundations Imaginarium."

This most recent gift brings the total amount of support for NTID from the Hearst Foundations to \$520,000: \$350,000 to the William Randolph Hearst Endowed Scholarship for Financially Underserved Students at NTID, and \$20,000 for a Wallace Library addition. Their first gift came in 1988, and since 1994 the Hearst Scholarship has supported 84 students with 177 scholarships totaling \$161,170.

In addition to the Hearst Foundations gift, RIT/NTID also received a commitment of \$250,000 in support of

Rosica Hall from an anonymous RIT/NTID graduate—the largest single alumni gift commitment in NTID history.

"Our alumni have a unique understanding of the value of an RIT/NTID education," Buckley says. "It's so gratifying to know that not only have our alumni benefitted from their time here, but they are willing to provide the kind of support that is essential for others to benefit as well."

In addition to the support of hundreds of alumni, students, parents, faculty, staff and friends, gifts totaling \$40,000 also have been received from RIT/NTID alumnus Andrew Jacobson in support of Rosica Hall. A space in the building will be named in recognition of his gift. Jacobson is a former member of the NTID Alumni Association Board of Directors and now serves on the NTID Foundation Board.



Andrew Jacobson

Aaron Kelstone

by Susan L. Murad



MARK BENJAMIN

Born in Kansas, Aaron Kelstone attended Kansas School for the Deaf, where students would tutor each other in subjects that were their strong suits.

“I started helping with English, and my teachers predicted I would become a teacher later,” he says. “I rebelled and avoided a teaching career to do other kinds of work, but my teachers were correct, and I became a teacher.”

Kelstone recently successfully defended his dissertation and earned a doctoral degree in Education with a focus on curriculum leadership.

“I’m happy to have finished a goal that I set many years ago,” he says. “It was an amazing journey for me.”

Before giving in to his inevitable teaching career, Kelstone was a licensed practical nurse; helped establish a social service agency providing interpreting, counseling, job placement, relay services and community outreach; and worked with Cleveland Signstage Theatre as an actor, general manager and artistic director.

An associate professor in NTID’s Cultural

and Creative Studies Department, Kelstone began his career at RIT/NTID substitute teaching for now-retired professor Patrick Graybill.

“I enjoyed it a lot, and a year later the college contacted me and asked me to return,” he says.

Kelstone also is the program director for NTID’s Performing Arts program, serves as co-chair of the Signing in Public Spaces Committee and is a representative on the NTID Faculty Congress.

He soon will be a representative on the Performing Arts Task Force established by RIT Provost Jeremy Haefner in response to a university goal of increased performing arts programming throughout the campus.

“Many people think of the performing arts as an opportunity to be an actor, yet the technical side of performing arts—sets, lights, costumes, scenery—offer wonderful dependable careers for individuals,” he says. “There also are management positions that can be rewarding and challenging career experiences within performing arts.”

Sidonie Roepke

by Susan L. Murad



A. SUE WEISLER

Quilters connect fabric and batting to create works of art. Teachers connect students and ideas to create their own works of art.

RIT/NTID’s Sidonie Roepke does both.

A member of the NTID faculty since 1984, Roepke teaches deaf and hard-of-hearing students enrolled in bachelor-level programs in RIT’s College of Imaging Arts & Sciences. She also is an academic advisor; tutors courses in art history, fine arts, crafts and foundations; and is coordinator for NTID’s Arts & Imaging Studies Support Team.

“I envision my classroom as a ‘crazy quilt,’” she says. “The crazy quilt is asymmetrical, made from colorful, random scraps. It is contained within a rectangle, and somehow, in the midst of all the visual chaos, there is order and cohesiveness. The teaching and learning process parallels the quilt making process.”

Roepke studied textile design at the Cleveland Institute of Art and is a graduate of RIT’s School for American Crafts where she earned a BFA and Master of Science in teaching visual arts, and a master’s degree in

Career and Human Resource Development in RIT’s College of Applied Science and Technology.

As an artist, Roepke creates mixed media works that have been exhibited in international, national and local juried shows. Her teaching style is about give and take, and provides her with inspiration as an educator and artist.

“As a quilter and teacher, I am working to build on others’ quilts and build my own at the same time,” she says.

The classroom setting and course requirements provide the edges, but it’s the interaction and discussion that add to the internal structure of both a quilt and educational experience.

“Each person has a different need,” she says.

Roepke’s ability to personalize the educational experience is what makes her so beloved by her students.

“The seaming together of the larger whole, the quilt, is teaching and learning at its best—unique, individual, but always willing to share pieces of knowledge.”

In the Spotlight



Dubbed “The Signing Sensation,” RIT/NTID ASL-English Interpretation alumna and former RIT/NTID staff interpreter Lydia Callis gained national recognition for her work interpreting for New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg during Hurricane Sandy.

Her style of interpreting gained her countless fans as videos of her interpreting popped up on YouTube and other social media sites, and a number of national media outlets published stories about her and her work.

“Lydia’s presence by Mayor Bloomberg’s side during and throughout the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy reminded the public of the important role interpreters play in providing access to vital information,” says NTID President Gerry Buckley. “We’re very proud of Lydia and the excellent work she does.”

“Lydia was an excellent student,” recalls Linda Siple, a professor in NTID’s ASLIE program. “She was very involved with the Deaf community here at NTID. I remember Lydia as being a very expressive and skilled interpreter, highly motivated, gracious and professional.”

NTID’s ASLIE program is the oldest and largest ASL interpreter training program in the nation, with roots dating back to 1969, with more than 900 interpreters trained. More than 400 graduates have received bachelor’s degrees and work in various settings including education, medicine, law and business. Currently, 160 students are enrolled in the four-year program.

See more about Callis at www.ntid.rit.edu/news/aslie-alum-spotlight.

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