

Education Became A Focus

By Deb Toresso

HCC alumna Linda Sundell knows the value of a community college education.

It was a part-time community college education that helped Linda, as a mother of five, move up the educational ladder to an associate degree, a bachelor's degree and ultimately a law degree.

It was also an education that impressed her so much that it became the focus of her professional life.

Linda graduated high school in 1960 at nineteen. She was married in 1961 and raised five children. She always intended to go back to college, but one thing always led to another.

There the intention languished... until, one day, she read that HCC had opened a branch in Milford High School where classes were held in the evenings. She decided to "get back to it."

With her kids still young, she and her husband somewhat low on funds, she decided she would take just two courses. Her first class was being taught by a young professor by the name of Cliff Roti.

On her first night of class, Linda found Cliff sitting on top of the desk dressed in a pair of jeans and thought, "Oh my God, what am I getting myself into?"

However, she found herself pleasantly surprised and ended up loving the class. Linda went onto take several more classes with Cliff.

Being an avid reader, Linda loved school and learning. When her children were small, she worked as a volunteer in the second grade. By the time she went back to college, she was hooked on school. She couldn't get enough. She got a job as a tutor to "support her habit" of taking classes.

When Milford ran out of choices for her to pursue, she took the bus to HCC on Barnum Avenue in Bridgeport. At that point, she was able to work around her kids' schedules, taking day classes while they were in school.

"Linda was one of the most intelligent students I had ever had," said HCC

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Wine Tasting at HCC



Several HCC alums had the opportunity to get together at the 40th Anniversary Wine Tasting Event on November 17, 2006. Between sampling all types of wines from dry to sweet, dinner to dessert and tasting food from over a dozen area restaurants, a great time was had by all.

Pictured are (from left to right), Dianne Nunn '81, Marion (Mauri) Schrade '70, Desiree Brooks '01, Cindy (Lidman) Lacasse '91, Marianne Laska '04 - chairperson for the event, Molly Rivas '05, Christine Ziembroski '06, and Linda Bayusik '96. Missing from photo is Janet Janczewski '81.

Photo courtesy of Harold Shapiro Photography

A Special Place in My Heart

By Marianne Laska, '04

Housatonic Community College will always have a special place in my heart. In 1999, after a 30-year career as a registered nurse at St. Vincent's Medical Center, I decided to return to college and pursue a degree in counseling. Choosing HCC was the best thing I could have ever done. Returning to college after many years as a "mature" student can be scary, but that fear was soon put to rest. I encountered a very dedicated, caring faculty always willing to spend extra time with anyone who needed help. I also took full advantage of the services of the academic support center when I needed some initial guidance with essay writing. I graduated in 2004 with a degree in Behavioral and Social Sciences with highest honors.

During my years at HCC, I met many dedicated students striving to empower their lives through education, sometimes having to overcome many obstacles along the way. Many, however, would not have been able to succeed without some type of financial help. Thus, when I was asked to join the HCC Foundation Board of Directors, I did so with the stipulation that I would be part of the scholarship committee. As chair of the resource committee, together with the help of a dedicated event committee consisting out of faculty, students, board members, staff and friends of the college, we have been able to raise a significant amount of funds for scholarships these past four years.

Currently, I work part-time as a pediatric nurse consultant and full time as a community volunteer for several organizations. In addition to my involvement with the HCC Foundation Board, I also serve on the Board of Trustees of St. Vincent's College, the Norma F. Pfriem Breast Care Center President's Council, and as special events co-chair for the Breast Cancer Survival Center. I assist the Bridgeport Public Education Fund, serve as a scripture study facilitator at St. Mark and St. James churches as well as Parish Nurse Coordinator at St. Mark Parish and, closest to my heart, I tutor and volunteer as a nurse at Mercy Learning Center.

Although the courses at HCC all challenged my mind, I believe that abnormal psychology and sociology have truly expanded my compassion for humanity, which in turn helps me tremendously as a community volunteer. •



Photo courtesy of Harold Shapiro Photography

Pictured above, Acting President Anita Gliniecki gives a bouquet of flowers to alumna Marianne Laska at the 40th Anniversary Wine Tasting event in appreciation for all her hard work for a successful event. Marianne is a Director on the Housatonic Community College Foundation Board, Chair of the Resource Development Committee and organizer of the fundraising event.

Education Became.... (continued from page 1)

Professor and Humanities Department Chairman Peter Ulisse. "Her answers would often go way beyond the questions asked on exams. She was extremely curious and always wanted to learn."

Linda's involvement with community college education went far beyond classroom education. After teaching herself to type, she took the position of Secretary of the Student Senate in HCC. During that time she met another student named Glenn Davis whom she feels was responsible for her "awakening." They soon became partners in a mutual quest to acquire financial help for community colleges.

Her early passion for this cause resulted in her starting the Student Association of Community Colleges. She and Glenn would drive all over Connecticut lobbying for funding. That experience led her to other opportunities in working within the community colleges system.

Linda received her associate degree in General Studies in 1977. She went on to the University of Bridgeport where, two years later, she received her bachelor's degree in philosophy.

Her academic journey was not over yet. Her next step was to go to the University of Connecticut to study law. Growing tired of traveling back and forth to Hartford, she decided to get a job closer to school.

She was hired as an Assistant Academic Officer for the Board of Trustees of the Community Colleges. She went onto receive her Law Degree from UConn in 1983 when she was forty- years old.

At this point, Linda realized that she was wed to community college education. She also realized that her law degree could help her in this field. She moved into a new position, director of student affairs and assistant counsel for the board of trustees.

In this new position, she was the point person for legislation, meeting with the Deans of colleges monthly and concerning herself with student affairs on day to day basis.

She held on to that position until she retired in 1997.

As HCC left its impact on Linda, she left its impact on HCC.

Lilly-Margaret Lazaruk, Founder of the HCC Women's Center, worked with Linda while at HCC. "Linda was ahead of her time," she said. "She had a great intellect, sense of adventure and enthusiasm," Lazaruk said. "She did everything well."

Peter Ulisse concurs. "When I heard she later went on to great success as a lawyer and a member of the Connecticut Community College System, I wasn't surprised" he said. "You just knew Linda was going to succeed at whatever she tried."

Today, Linda Sundell still plays an educational role in helping people. She reads to the blind over Chris Radio, a closed-circuit radio station that runs twenty-four hours per day, giving them the opportunity to hear about the news found in newspapers and magazines. She also sits on the board of the Milford Library. •

Moving On

By Hoa Nguyen, '01

I was born in Vietnam and came to the United States in 1997. So I am writing about the Vietnamese-American experience in college.

I wonder if I made the right decision to return to school to pick up a language and culture that's still pretty alien to me. I sometimes think it's too late to make up for so much lost time. I was a decade older than my classmates. But other times I realized that it is never too late to change and learn new things.

It's funny, I never thought I would be back in school or be learning to read and write English. But I think you should not pass up an opportunity just because you're afraid it won't turn out how you want it to. So I went in as an undecided major but soon was determined to be a neurobiology major with a minor in management. I spent hours researching this major and planning what I would take each semester to graduate on time. However, I soon realized that I despised

chemistry and could not handle three more courses of it. So I decided to choose something different. I enrolled in the accounting degree program offered by Housatonic Community College. I believed in Housatonic Community College because it has excellent professors who not only have strong backgrounds in culture and linguistics, but who also hope to meet students interested in learning and refining their communication skills. After graduating with an Associate's degree in Accounting in May 2001, I moved onward to Sacred Heart University and earned a Bachelor's degree in Accounting in May 2005.

In order to improve my reading and writing skills, I took some English courses. To me, taking English courses does not mean just learning the language, but also means connecting with the culture. Learning English is important for immigrants. Living here in the U.S. is like living in a different world for me, as there is a multicultural

environment. But I am not detached from my native language and culture. Maintaining two languages makes me able to build a stronger bridge between American and Vietnamese culture. Refining my Vietnamese skills further is also important because as a Vietnamese, I have lost my home. The only thing that is left in me is the language itself. If I were to maintain my language, my heritage and my culture remain in me, even though I am no longer able to reach Vietnam.

I try to instill the basic values of life in my son, such as having to know who we are

and accepting who we are before we can accept and appreciate others. Remember to believe in yourself even when it seems like no one else does. By doing so we will be able to achieve great things we never dreamed possible. Unlike high school, we have more freedom over our education in college, and we'll discover that many classes in college will spark our interest. Use the academic, social and extracurricular resources that are available in school and get involved in your

community. Enjoy the college experience! Take your academics seriously, but not too seriously. One grade will not determine your future. Go out during finals week to clear your mind. Find a balance between academics, friendships, and family. Some people say college is the best time of your life. Others say that it's completely overrated. College, I say, is only what you make of it.

I graduated from college with many sentimental memories. It is just the beginning! The journey has only started. I keep on learning and trying new things throughout my life. Lastly, I was hired to my dream job: Assistant Accountant for the Business Office at Housatonic Community College. Pursuing this career makes me more than happy. Ten years from now, I'd be still excited if I were working at this job that I love. If I could live my life all over again, I know I would do it all the same. Thank you, college! Thank you, America! •



Hoa Nguyen

Photo courtesy of Harold Shapiro

ALUMNI Notes

By Christina Ouellette

Arelis Maldonado, 2005

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After graduation from HCC, Arelis transferred to the University of Bridgeport. She is currently finishing her Bachelor's in Human Services, and she plans on graduating from there in May 2007.

Danielle Rimkunas, 2005

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Danielle graduated from HCC in 2005, and she's currently attending Southern Connecticut State University. She's studying to get her B.S. in Mathematics with certification, and completed her studies in December, 2006.

Before attending HCC, Danielle was a stay-at-home mother of two and married. Now that her kids are older and more independent, and her husband "has learned how to cook, vacuum and carpool," she said she's looking forward to being able to add another role to her life – the role of teacher. Recently, Danielle was hired to teach seventh grade math at a middle school in Milford.

Danielle currently lives in Stratford with her family.

Deborah Ann Murphy, 2003

After Deborah graduated from HCC. She continued her studies at Springfield College and graduated from there with a B.S. degree in August 2004.

In September 2004, she registered in a three-year program at Fordham University and is currently studying for her Master's in Social Work. Deborah anticipates graduating this May.

She currently lives in Bridgeport and is proud to say she is an alumna of Housatonic.

What Housatonic Community College Has Meant to Me

By *Patricia Kurowski, '00*

I graduated from Housatonic Community College in May 2000 with an Associates Degree in Business Office Technology and a Certificate in Microcomputer Applications. I will be graduating this spring (2007) with my second Associates Degree in Business Administration.

I began attending Housatonic Community College in 1995 at the age of 44. I had been working as a Rectory Housekeeper for my church and although it was good honest work, I felt I wanted something more. I had always dreamed of working in an office. Since I had never sat in front of a computer before, needless to say, my first few computer classes were a challenge. I started out slowly, taking one or two classes, working full time and taking care of my husband and five children. It was difficult, but I always felt that the staff, instructors and other students understood since many of them had traveled the same path I was about to embark on.

I always felt comfortable and welcomed at Housatonic. The staff and instructors really care about the students and were always there for me when I needed their help. From counseling to academic tutoring, there was always a place for me to go when I needed help.

Four of my five children have followed in my footsteps and attended Housatonic. They have watched me learn and grow and have decided to attend school along with their mom. My daughter Marcella graduated in 2002 with a degree in Art, my son Thaddeus has taken Computer Science courses, and my daughter Kathleen will be graduating this spring



Pat Kurowski

Photo courtesy of Linda Bayusik

with an Associates Degree in Criminal Justice. (We are both very excited about graduating together in 2007). My niece, Chantal (my adopted daughter) has also taken classes here. I am very proud of my children, and know that they are very proud of me.

While attending Housatonic, I became involved in the Honors Program. In our

current catalog, the Honors Program is described as a program especially designed for the outstanding student. To me it was much more than that. It offered me a chance to go beyond my regular studies and attempt things I never dreamed possible. One of the requirements for the Honors Program was an Independent Study Project. For my project I chose the History of Housatonic Community College. With the help of my faculty advisor, Bob Isaacs, I was able to independently research and create an 88-page book entitled “The History of Housatonic Community College – Home At Last”. I was honored to be one of five Housatonic students to graduate with the distinction of “Housatonic Scholar.”

I had been a work-study student in the Financial Aid Department during the last couple semesters before my 2000 graduation. I then went to the Business Office – first as a work study and then after graduation, a full time employee. My title is Purchasing Services Officer 1 and I love my job. I love to shop and getting paid to do it is the best!

I have been accepted at Charter Oak College and plan to begin my studies there in fall 2007; pursuing a Bachelors’ Degree in Business Administration.

I am married with 5 children, living on the East Side of Bridgeport. My home is two blocks away from the old HCC.

My hobbies and interests include being a member of the Secular Franciscan Order and being active in my church, St. Michael the Archangel. I also enjoy reading, scrapbooking, Christian music, and taking classes. I love learning new things – I am trying to learn to speak Polish. It’s not easy, but it is an interesting challenge. •

CONNECTIONS STAFF

Contributing Writers • Linda Bayusik '96, Christina Ouellette '06, Deb Torres

Design • Amanda Barrett

I never left! :)

By Janet Lanci, '88

I graduated Housatonic Community College in 1988 with an Associate degree in Human Services. In 1994, I received my Bachelor's degree from Liberty University in Virginia; this was done through distance learning before internet classes. I went on to get a Master's degree in counseling from University of Bridgeport in 1999, and became a licensed counselor in 2001.

I earned a Masters in Online Teaching (MOT) from University of Illinois Springfield campus in 2005. I am a Board Certified Expert in Traumatic Stress Diplomat, American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, listed in The National Registry of The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress and I am currently working on my Ph.D. in General Psychology at Capella University.

When it comes to work, it seems I never left HCC; I started as a work-study student in the Center for Educational Services. Once I graduated, I started working for Special Services as a Resource Specialist until 2000, when I became the Assistant Director of the Academic Support Center (ASC).

While working at the ASC, I started working as an Adjunct for Post University and for Housatonic Community College, I fell in love with teaching and became a full time Faculty at Housatonic in January 2004. I continue to adjunct for Post University, Bridgeport University and Saint Joseph's College, teaching Psychology, Sociology, Human Services and Gerontology.

Outside of Housatonic, I focus my work on disaster counseling. I am the Supervisory Mental Health Specialist for Connecticut 1 – Disaster Medical Assistance Team (CT1-DMAT). The team is a federal emergency team and we are

deployable anywhere in the United States or Territories of the United States.

I was deployed for two weeks to Louisiana last year; my responsibility is to make sure that the medical team's mental health is stable during the crisis.



Janet Lanci

Photo courtesy of Ram Root

I also see survivors of the disasters either in a walk-in clinic, or by going out to different shelters that my team and I are assigned to.

Recently the Community Mental Health Crisis Team of the Valley was awarded the silver award by the Valley Chamber of Commerce. I am very proud to say I am a part of this team as a member of their board and as a responding counselor. We respond to crisis in the community, an example would be on morning the team was called because someone had passed away during the third shift of a local factory. We came in to talk to the workers and the family during this crisis. We also have been called to different area schools to help when there has been something beyond the one counselor's ability to handle, a situation where

there needed to be multiple counselors available.

I also hold a counseling position in the Behavioral Health Regional Crisis Response Team with a specialty First Responders in Connecticut. I am part of the State of Connecticut Emergency Credentialing Program for Healthcare Professional and the Psychosocial Reserve Corps NYU Medical Center.

For the last three years I have been honored to have been awarded the Who's Who Amongst America's Teachers'. Post University awarded me last year their first Outstanding Service to Students in Human Services Instruction award.

I have three children now, Eddie is 27 years old and a student at Post University, Christopher is 14 and a freshman in high school, and Alexandra is 12 years old and in 7th grade. I have two lovely grandchildren who reside during the school year with their mother in Maine and in the summer with me, and they are 6 and 7 years old.

In my spare time, I am a volunteer Swim Official for USA Swim meets in Connecticut. I am a Girl Scout and do some volunteer work such as discussing date rape and domestic violence for Girl Scouts when called. I also crochet and work counted cross-stitch when I get a few free moments. •

Keep in Touch!

Got a new job? Finished your degree? Got married? Had a baby? Do you want to keep in touch with other Housatonic alumni? We want to know what's happening with you – and your Housatonic friends want to know too. Please take a few moments to tell us your name, year of graduation, email address, current job, and what you have been up to since graduation.

Linda Bayusik

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Alumni Event Update

Over 60 alumni and friends spent the evening of December 8, 2006 with sculptor Matthias Alfen and the opening of his new exhibit at the Housatonic Museum of Art.

Matthias Alfen offered a talk with a special preview of his exhibit for HCC alumni and their guests. Alumni enjoyed a private reception and a special presentation from the artist as he explained and interpreted his work.



Madonna, 2005

WINTER/SPRING 2007 Calendar of Events

HCC ACTIVITIES

March 22

- **11th Annual Community Job Fair**

For more information, please contact Linda Bayusik, HCC at (203) 332-5058.

HCC Atrium

HOUSATONIC MUSEUM OF ART

December 8 – February 21

- **Sculptural Installation by German Sculptor Matthias Alfen**

March 4 - March 28

- **40th Anniversary Exhibition**

Featuring Emeritus faculty.

April 2 – April 28

- **HCC Faculty Art Show**

Opening reception April 4 , 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm.

April 22 – April 28

- **Children's Illustrations**

An exhibit of original art from traditional "Teaching Stories" from Afghanistan that are published as children's books by Hoopoe Books.

Afghan storyteller Lina Rozbih, Voice of America for Afghanistan, will present to area preschool children on April 27th. For more info, please call Laurie Noe at 203.332.5255.

May 3 – May 31

- **HCC Student Art Show**

Opening reception May 7, 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm.

PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (PAC)

February 15

- **Brad Roth**

Dancing with Disabilities: Shared Ability Dance

March 15

- **L'Ana Burton**

Creative Dance relating to Children's Literature

April 19

- **Victoria Christgau**

Culture of Peace

All performances in the PAC are at 7:00 pm and are free and open to the public. All performances will include participation of Theater Arts student presentations as well.

HCC WOMEN'S CENTER

February 1

- **Open House**

Please join us between 11:00 am and 3:00 pm.

HCC Women's Center

February 15

- **New Women's History Course**

March 1

- **Woman Entrepreneur from Ghana**

March 15

- **In Our Right Minds**

Dale Allen's one-woman show about the evolution of women.

Room TBA, 7:00 pm

April 5

- **Why Should Women Run for Political Office?**

Essay contest – deadline for submission is March 27

April 12

- **Renter's Rights**

Desiree Brooks will discuss legal rights of those who rent in the Bridgeport area.

April 26

- **Women's Economic Security**

All events are subject to change. For more information, please call the Women's Center at (203) 332-5268 or Linda Bayusik at 203-332-5058.

Come join us!