



We began 2003 with the completion of a milestone effort: the creation of a facility masterplan for Mesa Community College for the next 20 years. The other Maricopa Colleges have done the same.

No one has a crystal ball when it comes to planning for two decades. What we do know is that vibrant communities like ours will continue to grow, thrive, and change. We also know that MCC must be ready to respond to the educational needs of the East Valley's diverse and growing population.

We have built a facility masterplan around three major factors: 1) population in the East Valley will continue to grow, which means MCC must be prepared to provide educational opportunities for more students; 2) our community, our region, and our state will need a strong and well-trained workforce, which means new programs, new technologies, additional labs and facilities, and more; and 3) the new directions now being planned by Arizona's three universities will mean MCC must continue — even enhance — its strong, collegial partnerships with our state universities.

The years ahead will bring both opportunities and challenges. MCC will be ready. We appreciate the ongoing support from our alumni and friends and will continue to keep you informed.

Sincerely,

Larry K. Christiansen

## District Board listens to citizens

On Thursday evening, January 23, Chandler-Gilbert and Mesa Community Colleges co-hosted the first of 12 Community Listening Sessions that will occur throughout the Valley during 2003. The sessions provide an opportunity for citizens to communicate their hopes and concerns about education directly to board members of the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD).

Dr. Fred Gaskin, MCCCD Chancellor, emphasized the value of community input in helping to shape the District's strategic planning issues.

MCCCD Director of Facilities Planning/Development Lionel Diaz recapped for the audience the commitments made and promises kept for capital expenditures from the \$386 million bond issue passed by voters in 1994: new facilities and buildings, renovations, improvements to technology infrastructure, furniture and fixtures, land purchases, and improved utilities.



Presidents of the hosting colleges, Dr. Larry K. Christiansen and Ms. Maria Hesse, spoke briefly before invited guests took their turns at the podium. An open forum followed, with short presentations by community leaders representing business, education, government, services, organizations, and clubs.

Citizens lauded the colleges' accomplishments and their commitment to excellence in education. They identified some future priorities and opportunities, too:

- Accommodating population growth
- Creating jobs in the East Valley; training a globally competitive workforce to fill them; addressing shortages in key fields such as teaching and health care
- Maintaining strong community partnerships with cities, schools and universities, business and industry, and organizations
- Responding to changing demographics (growth in the Hispanic community; impact of baby-boomers; outreach to low income/disadvantaged citizens)
- Planning for facilities: land, buildings, parking, transportation

Citizens offered many creative ideas to help guide the future of the Maricopa Community Colleges. Each of the board members responded at the end of the meeting, and Mr. Ed Contreras, president of the MCCCD Governing Board, offered a final remark: "We hear you. These board members are dedicated to the job they do, and we will do the right thing."

For dates of future Listening Sessions, go to [www.dist.maricopa.edu/gvbd/meetings.htm](http://www.dist.maricopa.edu/gvbd/meetings.htm).

### Online service helps job seekers find work

Looking for a new job opportunity? The Maricopa Career Network is a free online service that allows job seekers to post their résumés and access job listings for both full- and part-time employment. The electronic job board is accessible at no charge to alumni, students, and community members at [www.collegecentral.com/mesa](http://www.collegecentral.com/mesa). When you first log in, you'll be taken through a brief registration process and have an opportunity to post your résumé.

Employers who register with MCC's Career and Re-Entry Services will also have access to résumés of job seekers free of charge. As an added bonus, the site contains information on job fairs, workshops, and other events. For more information, please contact MCC Career and Re-Entry Services at [www.mc.maricopa.edu/services/career/](http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/services/career/) or call 480-461-7592.

## Building success stories, one student at a time

Paul Krech – counselor. Delores Begay – teacher. Ron Lee – Commissioner of Indian Affairs. What do these students have in common? They all benefited from MCC's American Indian Education Center (AIEC) and the wisdom of its director, Dr. Garrison Tahmahkera.

The AIEC connects students to much needed resources and provides counseling and support as they pursue their studies. One of the key goals of the AIEC is building relationships with the Indian community. According to Garrison, "that has not been difficult to do since MCC has an excellent reputation, known for having faculty and staff who go above and beyond to support students." Although Garrison's efforts are focused in Arizona, his influence is felt well beyond, attracting students from states such as Florida, New Hampshire, Alaska, Oklahoma, and Georgia.

Each year, Garrison visits reservations throughout the state to recruit students and provide financial aid workshops, sometimes visiting more than 15 schools in one week. Once students are admitted to MCC, Garrison becomes counselor, mentor, and friend. His duties cover a wide range. He helps students navigate the waters of financial aid, connects them to a revolving loan program, and finds resources when they cannot afford to buy groceries.

His efforts have paid off. Since Garrison became the director of AIEC in 1986, the American Indian population at MCC has more than doubled, from 254 students in 1986 to 756 in 2003. Each year 35-45 American Indian students graduate and two to three times that many transfer to four-year



institutions. These highly successful students go on to receive advanced degrees and move into careers such as law, medicine, counseling, and public service.

The AIEC was originally developed to meet the needs of the Indian population, but the philosophy is to help any student in need. Collaborations of the AIEC with MCC's Multicultural Services and Career & Re-Entry services have assisted students of other ethnicities as well.

Garrison knows firsthand the struggles that college students encounter. After earning the lowest ACT score ever achieved at Kansas State, an advisor informed Garrison that he would never achieve a college education. Garrison not only met his educational goals, but also went on to become the outstanding freshman student. He holds master's degrees in Social Work and Education and earned his Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology.

Garrison stated, "I have had the privilege of working with a wonderful team here at MCC. The Creator has blessed me with the opportunity to touch and be touched by the lives of many, and for that I am grateful." He stays in touch with many of the students with whom he has worked, and has had the pleasure of being invited by a variety of tribes to observe some of their most sacred ceremonies.

Garrison retired in January 2003 but will continue working at MCC on a part-time basis, focusing his energy on several grant projects and the development of programs in Indian Studies and Education. In addition, Garrison will be recording the language and stories of the Comanche Indians.

In the language of the Comanche Indians, who have no word for good bye, Garrison departs MCC with the phrase "Tsá ná Puni na – Until we see you again..."

## Inaugural meeting of MCC's Alumni Board



Pictured (left to right) Marcy Snitzer, Coordinator of Alumni Relations, and MCC Board members Donna Backhaus, Roc Arnett, Diana Occhiuzzi, Tony Occhiuzzi, and David Udall.

The MCC Alumni Association's executive committee held its first meeting on January 30, 2003. The six-member executive committee includes chairman David Udall, '83; Roc Arnett, '63; Diana Occhiuzzi, '69; Tony Occhiuzzi, '68; Donna Backhaus, '98 and Jacob Moore, '97. The committee was joined by MCC President, Dr. Larry K. Christiansen.

Two priorities were set for the spring semester: selection and appointment of additional board members and selection of an alumna/us to be recognized at the Community Recognition Luncheon hosted by Dr. Christiansen in May.

The group also brainstormed opportunities for the alumni association, which included increasing scholarship offerings for students, connecting MCC graduates with the business community, and expanding MCC's existing alumni chapters and adding new ones. MCC currently has eight chartered chapters: Mortuary Science, Firefighter, Child Care Center, Children's Center, Black Student Union/African American Unity Coalition, Sun Valley Chorale, Associated Students of MCC, and Psi Beta.

The energy in the room was powerful! Committee members bring a wealth of knowledge about MCC, a myriad of fond memories about their educational experiences while attending MCC, and enthusiasm to advance MCC's alumni association.

## Gardens teach beauty, respect for Earth



Sonoran Desert Walkway



Xeriscape Garden



Deserts of North America

Life Science faculty member Ron Dinchak has nurtured the development of MCC's desert gardens since the 1980s. To maintain the gardens' beautiful display of native vegetation, Ron enlists student caretakers to hoe, plant, rake, and prune. To fund the gardens he writes grant proposals, often collaborating with other MCC employees and community organizations.

Successful grantwriting contributed to a recent award of \$7,100 from the Arizona State Land Dept. Partners in this endeavor are Cathy Rymer, from the University of Arizona (Maricopa County) Cooperative Extension Office and Donna DiFrancesco, from the City of Mesa Utilities

displaying scientific names of trees and three interpretive signs—two about tree care and one explaining the ethnobotany of the Mesquite tree ("tree of life").

MCC's community gardens, in various stages of completion, include

the Sonoran Desert Walkway at the Red Mountain campus and several gardens at Southern and Dobson:

- Rose Garden, north entrance
- Xeriscape Garden, surrounding the Social/Cultural Science building (christened in 1989, first in the Valley)
- Deserts of North America (Great Basin, Mojave, Chihuahuan, and Sonoran), near the Life Science and Social/Cultural Science buildings

Students from all over the Valley benefit from MCC's award-winning gardens. They provide a gigantic outdoor laboratory for studies in geology, geography, biology, horticulture, art, and more. Ron's "MCC garden file" bulges with news clippings about tours, school visits, Science Day, a landscape fair, projects with Master Gardeners, Earth Day celebrations, and numerous awards and community partnerships. Last year 2,200 students used the gardens.

Donna DiFrancesco commends Ron's continued orchestration of the gardens: "He has been incredible with all of this—working hard all these years," she said. "He has great vision." Ron said his goals are to broaden the gardens' educational opportunities, find a guaranteed funding source, and ultimately create a position for a garden coordinator.

## Check out what's happening at MCC this Spring

**March 11**  
**Psychology Evening Lecture Series "Searching for the Psychology in Shakespeare, Van Gogh, the Bible, and Rush Limbaugh"**  
Bob Johnson, Ph.D.  
Kirk Student Center, Navajo Room

**March 12-15**  
**Lucky Stiff**  
Music by Stephen Flaherty  
Act 1 Musical Theatre  
Theatre Outback

**March 27-28**  
**Spring Dance Concert**  
Theatre Outback

**April 3**  
**Psychology Evening Lecture Series "Never Underestimate the Power of Laughter"**  
Cheyenne Autumn, M.S.  
Kirk Student Center, Navajo Room

**April 14-24**  
**Student Art Show**  
Kirk Student Center, Navajo Room

**May 1-4**  
**Arcadia**  
A Comedy by Tom Stoppard  
Theatre Arts  
Theatre Outback

**May 9**  
**Broadway Bound**  
Musical Theatre  
Theatre Outback

**May 16**  
**Commencement**  
Grass area west of clock tower

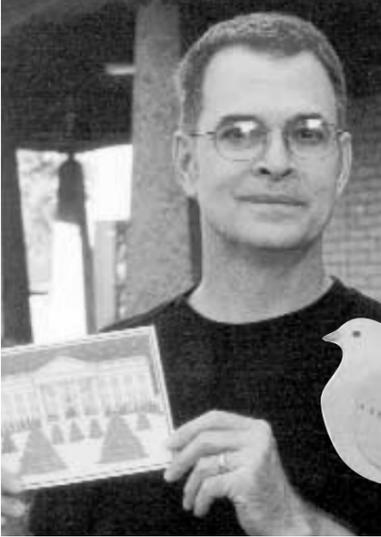
**April 10**  
**4th Annual Water Safety Day**  
Co-sponsored by MCC  
Glendale Community College

**April 14-24**  
**Student Art Show**  
Kirk Student Center, Navajo Room

**May 1-4**  
**Arcadia**  
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**Commencement**  
Grass area west of clock tower



## MCC art teacher goes to the White House

Ron Bimrose, an adjunct faculty member at MCC, recently went to the White House. Ron was selected to make an ornament for the White House Christmas tree and was invited to a reception by First Lady Laura Bush.

In October, the White House sent a request to each state's governor to ask for artist participation. The request was then forwarded on to the Arizona Commission on the Arts who selected the artists.

For his ornament, Ron chose a ruddy ground dove, a rare species that lives in Arizona. Ron is an avid birder and so is Laura Bush. It took him about a week to make the ornament, which is approximately 6 inches tall and is a block of wood that links two matching heavy paper profiles.

Ron teaches photography and mixed-media art at MCC. Sarah Capawana, Chair of the Art Department, stated, "Ron is a very sought after instructor. His classes fill up quickly and students are anxious to continue their studies with him. Many of his past students keep in touch with him and ask for critiques and advice on their artwork." Ron has also had numerous exhibitions of his artwork in both local and national galleries.

## Art Dept. responds to "digital" trends

MCC's Art Dept. currently offers five Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees and five Certificate of Completion (CCL) programs for students enrolled in Media Arts: Computer Art/Illustration, Digital Imaging, Desktop

by 2004 more than 90 percent of web content will be Digital Video, Digital Audio, and Interactive Media. Cyndi and several students attended the 2003 Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, where they learned that 585 of the 830 films submitted were created (all or in part) in digital format. More than 50 percent of all television programs are shot and edited digitally as well. All of this means more work for digital artists and more students who need training.

MCC's Art Dept. is already charting a new course. "Programs we are hoping to add," Cyndi said, "include Digital Filmmaking/Editing, Multimedia Design, and Information Design. Each of these would have an associated AAS and CCL." Cyndi's nephew earned a filmmaking degree at Scottsdale Community College, learning AVID and AfterEffects for digital editing. "He currently edits for Lifetime and VH1 and earns \$1,900 per week," she said. "There always seems to be many jobs in this area and most of them pay well."

Media Arts students eagerly await a Digital Filmmaking degree at MCC. "We added a digital filmmaking class in December, and with absolutely no notice, the class still made," Cyndi said. "We're planning a student film festival at the end of the semester, and we're going to call it SweatFest. Dan Harkins has indicated that we may be able to have the screenings at one of his theaters."

with a reception on Tuesday, April 15.

As part of the Art Department's plan to expand the Media Arts program, new IMacs were installed in the Art/Communication building's computer lab. The software package comprises the most up-to-date versions of Photoshop, Illustrator, Premiere, AfterEffects, Microsoft Office, Macromedia (Flash, Dreamweaver, Freehand, Fireworks), Quark, and the Internet.

MCC Student Nate Smith (foreground) works on a drawing assignment on an iMac in the new media arts lab.

Publishing, Web Publishing, and Animation. "We're very proud of these programs," said Media Arts program advisor Cyndi Greening. "Feedback from the community indicates that we're doing an excellent job with these programs."

But even outstanding programs must keep pace with career trends. Cyndi said Apple Corporation research predicts that

## More Arts News

- The Art Dept., in conjunction with the Office of Institutional Advancement, published MCC's very first Arts Calendar in 2003. The calendar includes artwork from student art shows, representing more than a dozen disciplines.
- Enrollment in the Art Dept. has increased 40 percent with the addition of the Media Arts program.
- The Student Art Show for 2003 will be April 14-24,



## Get your alumni card!

The Office of Alumni Relations proudly announces the first issuance of the MCC Alumni Card. Membership in MCC's alumni association is free and open to anyone who attended the college. Requesting your alumni card puts you on our active membership list and entitles you to a variety of services:

- Invitations to special events and ceremonies
- Free admission to all athletic events
- Discounted tickets to the Theatre Outback
- A 10% discount at the MCC Bookstore on merchandise bearing the MCC logo
- Free library privileges
- Free use of MCC Career and Re-Entry Services

To receive your card, please contact the Office of Alumni Relations at jenner@mail.mc.maricopa.edu or call 480-461-7794. Benefits will be added, so please notify the Office of Alumni Relations of any name or address changes.

*Alumni & Friends* is published by the Office of Institutional Advancement (IA) three times a year for alumni of Mesa Community College.

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The Maricopa County Community College District is an EEO/AA institution.

**Bon Voyage!**  
MCC bids a sweet farewell to our recent retirees.

Jo Wilson  
Director of Extended Campus  
Retired June 2002

Johnice Wilkins  
Director of Student Leadership  
Retired December 2002

Rose Ann Haw  
Mathematics faculty  
Retired December 2002

Jessica Stewart  
Custodian  
Retired December 2002



# Alumni & Friends

SPRING 2003

## Educating the community about water safety

April 10 marks the 4th Annual Water Safety Day. Water Safety Day brings children from kindergarten through third grade to the community college to learn about safety and build awareness.



Water Safety Day teaches safety through fun activities including: safety presentations for children, instructed by local fire departments; tours of fire engines, emergency helicopters, ambulances, and a sheriff's department diving boat; lake and river safety; first aid and water safety instruction for parents, high school, and college students; water rescue and swimming demonstrations; home preventative/safety instruction; and a "Build a Reminder" workshop for children. Last year the children built a fire truck with materials donated by Home Depot.



**History of Water Safety Day**  
Weston Thomas Letter drowned in his family's swimming pool on May 31, 1998. Weston's dad, Tom, is a local firefighter, is trained in CPR, and has experience in responding to tragic calls. Weston's mom, Druann, is an elementary school educator, Drowning Prevention and Awareness Coordinator at Phoenix Children's Hospital, and teaches childhood safety to her students and the community.

The Letters thought they had covered all aspects of water safety with their son until that tragic day. Druann and Tom went to great lengths to protect Weston, teaching him safety measures, enrolling him in swim lessons, and making him aware of water dangers. Weston was 3 years old when he died.

In 1999 the family created the Water Watchers board to establish an annual Water Safety Day to honor Weston's memory and promote water safety education throughout the community.

**One day of activities...365 days of prevention**  
Water Safety Day has grown significantly since its inception. The first year the event was held, approximately 1,600 children attended. This year over 3,400 children are expected. Each year the attendance grows, and the Water Watchers board hopes that their message is getting out to individuals who have children. Weston's grandmother, Carol Achs, Associate Dean of Math, Computer Sciences, and Physical Education at MCC and President and Co-founder of Water Watchers, states that the best measure of success for the group "would be no more drownings."

Water Watchers is a non-profit organization whose goals are to educate the community about water safety issues; to provide educational programs in water safety through curriculum development; to be a resource for the community; to promote awareness that tragedy knows no boundaries; and to honor the memory of Weston Letter.



### Event Info

Water Safety Day is sponsored in part by Mesa Community College, Glendale Community College, Valley Toyota Dealers, SRP, The Home Depot, Cigna, Phoenix Children's Hospital, Water Watchers, and many valley fire departments.

**Date:** April 10, 2003 **Time:** 9 AM -2 PM  
**Location:** Glendale Community College  
6000 W. Olive Avenue

For more information or to volunteer, please contact Carol Achs, 480-461-7742, or email Carol.Achs@mcmail.maricopa.edu. You may also visit [www.mc.maricopa.edu/organizations/community/waterwatchers/](http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/organizations/community/waterwatchers/).

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