

# MCC Viewed as Strong Anchor for Fiesta District Revitalization

In the 1980s, Mesa's Fiesta District was considered one of the Valley's foremost shopping and entertainment districts. The area, which encompasses U.S. 60 to Southern Avenue, and Extension to Dobson roads, experienced a gradual decline after the opening of several competing venues in other parts of Mesa, including Superstition Springs, Arizona Mills, Riverview and Tempe Marketplace.

After advice from urban-planning experts in 2009, the City of Mesa faced facts that Fiesta would never again be a regional retail mecca, but could be suitable for mixed-use, urban-style development. Plans were put into motion to make the area more pedestrian-friendly and offer catalysts for private investment.

Revitalization has begun. In October, the City of Mesa opened a new police station southeast of the Bank of America tower on Alma School Road. Workers are now in the process of tearing up Southern Avenue for a \$10 million reconstruction and landscaping project.

Mayor Scott Smith has named Fiesta as one of four key economic-development nodes across the city. Mesa Community College, one of the main anchors for the district, is playing a major role in the revitalization by moving forward on several large construction projects.

The former Harkin's Theatre at the Southeast corner of the campus is being remodeled into a new Performing Arts Center. The center will support music and dance programs and bring many performances back to campus which are currently held off site. A new Art Gallery and Enrollment Center will also provide more opportunities for Mesa residents.

Recently, MCC geography instructor Steve Bass made a presentation on Urban Geography in the Fiesta District as part of



**Geography Awareness Week. We thought we'd share his insight into what the future may hold for Mesa's Fiesta District and MCC.**

**Question: Steve, in your opinion, does the Fiesta area have a good chance of being successfully revitalized into a thriving urban area?**

**A:** Yes, the Fiesta District and surrounding neighborhoods possess a strong potential to become a thriving urban area. This portion of Mesa possesses two strong anchors, Mesa Community College and Banner Desert Medical Center. It is ideally located within close proximity to U.S. 60, Loop 101, and the light-rail line. Inner suburban locations such as southwest Mesa are attractive for increased density mixed-use development.

**Q: What role would MCC play?**

**A:** As a major landowner, employer and attraction in southwest Mesa, MCC will play an important role in the revitalization of the area. There are opportunities for partnerships between MCC and other private and public institutions for shared use of facilities. MCC's Community Rose Garden serves as a current example. There are also opportunities for shared marketing, such as discounts at local establishments for MCC students and employees, and on-campus job recruitment by local employers. MCC possesses enormous resource talent among our employee and

A new police station southeast of the Bank of America Tower on Alma School opened in October.



student populations. It will be beneficial to utilize this talent in the planning and implementation of Fiesta District improvements.

**Q: What is the biggest factor in making the revitalization successful?**

**A:** While revitalization of the Fiesta District is dependent upon the strength of the economy at the macro level, much can be done locally. It is important that we view the Fiesta District as inclusive of surrounding neighborhoods. The era of "big-box" land uses in inner suburban locations is being replaced by mixed-use developments, where housing, employment and entertainment are located within close proximity. Mesa has taken a step in this direction by investing in a streetscape project along Southern Avenue in an effort to attract new residents to the area. A key component to the success of the Fiesta District will be a frequent and convenient transit connection to the light rail extension along Main Street.



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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

For a complete listing of events and times, check out our online calendars.

**General MCC Events:** [mesacc.edu/alumni](http://mesacc.edu/alumni) and click **Events Calendar**

**Athletics:** [athletics.mesacc.edu/schedules](http://athletics.mesacc.edu/schedules)

- SOUTHERN & DOBSON CAMPUS
- RED MOUNTAIN CAMPUS

**February 27-28, March 1, 4-8**  
*Into the Woods*  
■ Theatre

**March 7, 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.**  
Astronomy Nights  
Planetarium shows every half hour  
■ Physical Science Building

**March 20-21, 7:30 p.m.**  
Spring Dance Production  
■ Theatre

**March 22, 7:30 p.m.**  
Dance Scholarship Showcase  
■ Theatre

**March 26, 10 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**  
Job and Career Expo  
■ Event Tent

**March 26, 2014, 4:30-7:00 p.m.**  
MCC Open House  
■ Event Tent

**March 27, 2014, 4:30-7:00 p.m.**  
MCC Open House  
■ Mesquite Building

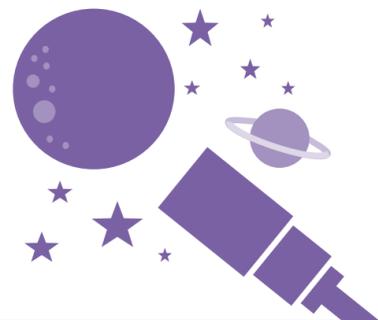
**April 4, 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.**  
Astronomy Nights  
Planetarium shows every half hour  
■ Southwest Physical Science Building

**April 18-19, 24-26**  
*Dead Man's Cell Phone*  
■ Theatre

**April 25**  
Grand Re-Opening of the MCC Theatre  
The Theatre Outback has been remodeled and renamed.  
■ Theatre

**May 2, 7:30 p.m.**  
*Broadway Bound*  
■ Theatre

**May 2, 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.**  
Astronomy Nights  
Planetarium shows every half hour  
■ Southwest Physical Science Building



# Alumni & Friends

A Publication for the Mesa Community College Alumni Association

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## MCC Instructor One of Top 20 Cisco Trainers in U.S.

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**The Cisco Networking Academy recently notified Mesa Community College instructor Bob Samson that he is one of their top 20 train-the-trainers in North America.**

Samson is in his 10th year as an instructor in Cisco Networking Academy classes at MCC. Along with teaching traditional student classes, he is also a train-the-trainer for instructors in the Cisco Networking Academy Program, which has approximately 5,000 academies and 1,000,000 students worldwide.

**"In addition to supporting other instructors nationwide, this allows me to be a better instructor to MCC students by previewing new curriculum, interacting with other very talented instructors, and anticipating certification changes,"** Samson said.

Cisco recently revamped its instructor-trainer model and went to an invitation-only based program which required the

candidate to pass a difficult online test, and then travel out of state for a 10-hour, in-person test. This process involved tough technical questions, live troubleshooting labs, pop-quiz type questions, creating micro-teach scenarios, and live teaching demonstrations.

Only about one-third of train-the-trainer candidates are successful, resulting in approximately 80 train-the-trainers in North America.

In addition to this recognition, Samson also placed 3rd out of 120 entries in an international contest amongst Cisco Instructor-trainers.

"I look forward to continuing to bring top-notch instruction and support to our students and other faculty members, and to maintain MCC's reputation as a world-class educational institution," Samson said.

**To learn more about MCC's Cisco and other Network and Security programs, visit [www.mesacc.edu/programs/networking-security](http://www.mesacc.edu/programs/networking-security).**



Jinnett Kirk was Dean of Students at MCC from 1965 to 1979.

## MCC remembers founding Dean of Students Jinnett Kirk Shirley passes away at age 94

The name Kirk may be immediately reminiscent of the Student Center on the Southern and Dobson campus, but for some the name evokes memories of the amazing woman, Jinnett Kirk, whom the building was named after. Jinnett Kirk worked for 14 years at MCC; as the Dean of Students she made it her goal to guide and encourage students.

She went above and beyond her job description, championing students when they were struggling, creating and advising numerous student clubs, and often inviting students to her house. Kirk's daughter, Joan Hancock, recalls that sometimes there would be as many as 75 students in their home.

Described as a "vivacious, petite brunette with sharp, dancing brown eyes," Kirk was not physically intimidating, but she had an inner fire that drove her to put others' safety before her own, no matter the size or intensity of her opposition. Retired Theatre faculty, Lyn Dutson,

remembers her as "one of the quiet powerful women of the world, an amazing role model of feminine power without aggression."

Kirk was devoted to helping the students; it was more than a job, it was her passion. Bill Holt, retired Dean of Instruction, recalled that

*"There is nothing I would rather have spent my life doing than working with students,"*

**Jinnett Kirk Shirley.**

when one student was sent to jail for 30 days, Kirk made sure her teacher helped the student remain caught up in the class. On several occasions she even drove homework to students' houses when they were unable to get it themselves. No student was unworthy of her individual attention, no task too menial.

She also knew how to listen to students, was empathetic to their needs. In 1970, following the shooting



at Kent State University, two groups of students began arguing on campus. When it seemed likely that violence would ensue, Kirk brought out a microphone and allowed students to speak their minds, solving the matter efficiently and peacefully. It was this talent for respectful, caring, and peaceful conflict resolution that caused students to term her 'friend' and earned her the respect and admiration of faculty.

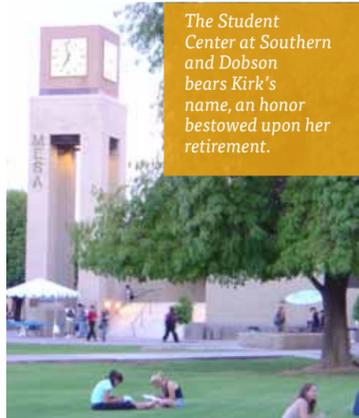
Unfailingly kind, passionate about her work, and dedicated to student success, Jinnett Kirk was an amazing woman who impacted many around her. Alumna Debbie Hentges remembers Kirk fondly, remarking, "You always knew she cared. She was fun. Loved to laugh. She enjoyed being with us students."

Jinnett Kirk Shirley (married to Joe Shirley in 1987) passed away Tuesday, September 10, 2013, at the age of 94. She will be sorely missed by all those who knew her.

Highlights of her numerous accomplishments include the **Don Carlos Humanitarian Award**, Tempe City Council; and the **Aware**

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**Awards to Women of Achievement Minerva Award**, presented by the renowned Humanitarian, Marlo Thomas. A graduate of Oklahoma A&M in Stillwater, OK, she later earned an M.A. at Arizona State University, an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Chapman College, and completed educational work at Univ. of CA at Berkley and Arizona State. Daughter Joan Hancock notes with pride that she successfully combined a demanding career with the joy of family life and community service - *"She was a wonderful mother."*



## Alumna pursues passion as novelist Publishes *On the Edge of Wishing* for young adults

MCC alumna Danette Key discovered that sometimes change opens up access to inner creativity.

Born and raised in Arizona, Key worked in the insurance industry for 26 years. But when she and her husband decided to make a change and move to upstate New York, Key began a whole new career as an author of young adult novels.

"My life changed when we moved," Key said. "Sometimes change motivates creativity."

Key's new young adult book, *On the Edge of Wishing*, began as the result of letters written back and forth between her and her mother. Key describes the book as a fun, easy read that encourages gratitude with a slight warning to "be careful what you wish for."

Key said so far the reviews of the book have been positive.

"I find that young people love my book because it is simple and easy to read," said Key, who raised three children and has several grandchildren. "One of the goals of my book was to have a clean book

with a great story line that wasn't too predictable that you would be proud to give to your teen as a gift."

Key obtained her associate's degree from MCC in 2008 and her bachelor's degree in Business Management and Leadership from Capella University in 2010.

While at MCC, Key appreciated the way instructors nurtured her creative impulses.

*"I loved the open atmosphere of being able to discuss things in class at MCC,"* Key said. *"That's always helpful to anyone who is creative."*

She recently moved again, this time to Texas. Could this change inspire yet another novel? Stay tuned...

*"On the Edge of Wishing,"* may be purchased from iUniverse, Amazon and Barnes & Noble. Key's author page is here: [danettelkey.com/index.htm](http://danettelkey.com/index.htm)

## Scholarship Recipient Completes Master's Degree, Touts MCC and Community Colleges

Molly O'Dwyer took a circuitous route from Mesa Community College to the University of North Carolina, where she received her Master's Degree in Information Science in December 2013.

O'Dwyer, now 30, grew up in Mesa and graduated from Mesa High School before attending MCC. She received MCC's Alumni & Friends scholarship in the spring of 2004, and attended MCC from 2001-04.

"I never regretted going to a community college to start my education," she said. "MCC was always a better option for me. I figured I was more likely to finish because I took the classes there rather than a university, where I could have been overwhelmed by the class size. Going to MCC allowed me to transition to higher education."

Molly transferred to the University of New Mexico after MCC, graduating with a Bachelor's degree in history in December, 2006. "I was trying to figure out what to

do after UofNM, and I looked at a lot of schools," she said. "I had an interest in museums and research, but information science provided more career options. I eventually decided on the data management side, and I'm looking to work for a company in data management or project management."

Molly chose University of North Carolina because of its proximity to the famed Research Triangle Park, an area situated between UNC, North Carolina State University, and Duke University. "It has a lot of large technology, health

and pharmaceutical companies, like Cisco, and those are the companies I'll be targeting," she said.

Another advantage to attending MCC was mingling with older students. "They were a good example of lifelong learning, of not giving up," she said. "It was nice to be around older mature students."

Today Molly continues to extol the virtues of a community college education, including those she meets in North Carolina. "It's definitely the way to go to start your education."



*"Every time I talk to new students I always direct them to community colleges because I had such a great experience at MCC."*

## MCC Receives NSF Grant for Geospatial Technologies

Mesa Community College has been awarded a \$448,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to support career and educational pathways in geospatial technologies (GST). The project period is from 9/1/13 to 8/31/16.

Geospatial technologies includes equipment used in visualization, measurement, and analysis of earth's features, typically involving such systems as global positioning systems (GPS), geographical information systems (GIS), and remote sensing (RS).

Through the Geospatial Connections Promoting Advancement to Careers and Higher Education (GEOCACHE) project, MCC will partner with Northern Arizona



University to provide professional development and support for two cohorts of 20 secondary teachers and college faculty.

"This grant will facilitate the development of career pathways from K-12 through two-year and four-year institutions for students interested in geospatial technologies," said Karen Blevins, geography faculty at MCC. "This will also facilitate the integration

of geospatial technologies into other disciplines."

The grant supports a variety of geospatial projects for students at MCC, including a data-collection project in the college's Rose Garden.

The U.S. Department of Labor considers the field a high-growth industry and projects GST employment to increase 35 percent by 2020.