Santa at Monroe

Each year, Monroe transforms the entirety of its King Hall building into a Winter Wonderland filled with festive decorations – including lights, artificial snow and Christmas trees – baked goods, cookies and candy, as well as holiday cartoon characters who provide lively entertainment for children. Over 1,000 people attended, including Monroe College students, faculty and staff. Each child received a gift from Santa.

“We truly look forward to hosting this particularly special event each year for our students, faculty, staff and of course, their families,” said Stephen Jerome, President of Monroe College. “It is absolutely heartwarming to see the delight on children’s faces as they pass through the spectacle of our Winter Wonderland and get caught up in the magic of the season. I know of no better way to ring in the season than to witness their sheer excitement at seeing Santa, receiving a gift, and taking pictures with him.”

The event is organized by Monroe College faculty and staff, who are committed to ensuring a festive, fun holiday celebration for students and their children.
A Monroe Success Story

Deon E. Durrant began studies at Monroe College in 2006 seeking her BBA in Health Services Administration. After a few semesters she realized her first love was Claude. She remained committed to her studies and immediately set out to achieve her next goal: her MBA, which she earned in 2010 with nearly a perfect 4.0 cumulative average.

It was appropriate that she should consult with her family. They had lots of experience regarding Monroe. Five members of her family, including her sister, were attending or had already completed degrees at the college while she was enrolled. Subsequently, her son and niece graduated from Monroe making a total of eight family members having studied at the college!

Following completion of her Monroe MBA, Durrant enrolled for a Ph.D. program and has now added that degree to her credentials.

Dr. Durrant recently called Monroe College President Stephen Jerome to thank him for the education she received. She noted that in comparison to other students in her doctoral classes, she was “extremely well prepared” for the work. She felt her experience at Monroe was “phenomenal, especially in the manner in which the business program taught her both analytical and critical skills.” Dr. Durrant also had kind words for the faculty and administrators of the School of Business and Accounting, singling out Professor Sherman Browne because he was always “available and helpful,” and Professor Roberta Harris because she was “inspirational.”

Deon Durrant has come a long way since the day she arrived at the New Rochelle campus seeking her bachelor’s degree. She now has multiple degrees and has relocated to Florida where she hopes to begin a career in business. She noted in her conversation with President Jerome that wherever she might be, she “will never forget Monroe College and the people who helped make her dreams come true.”

The AIM High Revolution Has Begun

The AIM High Empowerment Institute recently had its first induction ceremony. AIM High has taken fifty young men from various backgrounds to be the first to be inducted into the program. The purpose of AIM High is to build the “Competence, Confidence, and Character” of the young men, getting them “Engaged, Educated, and Empowered.” These young men, as part of the program, are indeed men of “persistence and intelligence.”

The event was attended by President, Stephen Jerome, deans, faculty, staff, business professionals, parents and well-wishers. NYS Senator Gustavo Rivera, Councilman Andy King and Assemblymen Carl Heastie and Victor Pichardo were also in attendance. The young men sat attentively, in their bright orange ties symbolizing energy and enthusiasm, as they listened keenly to Senator Rivera encourage them to take advantage of the opportunity that is before them, and challenged them to “stick to it.” He urged them to be committed to their success, and echoed President Jerome’s earlier comment that he wanted to see them all graduate.

AIM High was founded and is being directed by Professor Sherman Browne and Admissions Director Dr. Cecil Wright. Several professors and staff members of Monroe College have stepped up to the plate to be coaches for these young men over the next year. These students are poised for success, as they keep up their, “Ambition, Inspiration, and Motivation,” and AIM-high.
Monroe College’s School of Criminal Justice hosted a symposium entitled, “Keeping Safe and Alert: Responding to Active Shooter Incidents,” which was held at the College’s Bronx campus on October 16. Law enforcement officials from around the tri-state area met at Monroe’s Bronx campus to discuss the issue.

A recent FBI study on mass shootings was an eye opener for many. It looked at 150 active shooter cases between the years 2000 and 2013. These shootings left 486 people dead and 557 wounded.

Leading the discussion were several distinguished public figures who have experience and expertise to provide valuable knowledge and insights on the issue at hand, including Michael Kehoe, chief of the Newtown Police Department, who was present during the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012. He was joined by three senior officials from the New York Police Department (NYPD), including John Miller, Deputy Commissioner for Intelligence and Counterterrorism, Deputy Chief Vincent Giordano, Commanding Officer of the Emergency Service Unit; and Daniel Oleks, Intelligence Research Specialist.

“As active shooter incidents are becoming increasingly widespread, posing a serious threat to individuals and communities alike, it is of the utmost importance to be on guard and prepared in the event that such an incident occurs,” said Michele Rodney, Dean of Monroe’s School of Criminal Justice. “This symposium brought together top officials and leading experts who have experienced the devastating impact of active shooter violence first-hand. It also helped foster a discussion on preparedness and tactics going forward.”

Law enforcement professionals from police agencies in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut attended, along with public safety officers for hospitals, movie theaters, and shopping malls.

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The theme for this year’s Parade was LAND OF THE FREE / HOME OF THE BRAVE, in honor of the 200th Anniversary of the writing of the ‘Star Spangled Banner’ (1814 ~ 2014). The Parade honors all eras and branches of service, with the U.S. Marine Corps as this year’s Featured Service Branch. In addition, the Parade is a Partner of the ongoing United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration.

America’s Parade plays a critical role in raising awareness of the issues faced by all veterans – especially our most recent generation of veterans of Iraq, Afghanistan and other Post-9/11 operations. By telling their story on the nation’s largest stage, the Parade reminds Americans everywhere of the service and sacrifice of those who have defended our freedoms, and mobilizes the public to support those organizations that are working tirelessly to serve their needs.

The College’s student veterans were proud to be a part of this celebration.

Prior to the competition, the participants attended several workshops, which were presented by Dr. Ahmed Eshra, the advisor of the CEO club. The competitors were then encouraged to use what they learned in the workshops to prepare and present their business plans. Dashawn Spencer, a business management major, passionately presented “4bit Coin,” a nonprofit business that creates learning centers for students who struggle with learning. Next, Sunghoon Park and Jason Peri, MBA students, presented their digital start-up company, “KEEPCOMM,” which offers a digital screen menu that increases the quality of e-menus at hospitality facilities. Finally, Takeisha Bowens, a Business Administration major, presented her fashion company, DeLuXe Designer Collections. DeLuXe is a luxury handbag collection in which each handbag expands into a tote bag for extra storage. She supported her plan by explaining her target market and financial projections; she also confidently responded to the judges questions. At the end of the competition, the judges and audience voted; then Dr. Eshra announced Takeisha Bowens as the winner of CEO’s third annual Business Plan Competition. Takeisha will be awarded $500.

Dr. Eshra extended special thanks to the Student Activities Office, the judges, and CEO’s executive board. He also thanked the students for their participation in the competition; finally he encouraged the students to follow their dreams.

Takeisha Bowens wins Business Plan Competition

The Club for Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) proudly hosted its third annual Business Plan Competition in the Mintz Auditorium. Competitors Dashawn Spencer, Takeisha Bowens, Sunghoon Park, and Jason Peri had the opportunity to present their business plans to fellow students and a panel of judges.

Once again the Monroe College chapter of Student Veterans of America participated in the Veterans Day parade in New York City.

The 2014 parade featured thousands of marchers, 600,000 spectators, and many parade-related events throughout the city. The parade route on Fifth Avenue began following a wreath-laying ceremony at the Eternal Light Monument in Madison Square Park.

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Monroe College is ranked among the top higher education schools in the country for graduating minority students, according to data released by Diverse: Issues in Higher Education Magazine. Virtually all of Monroe’s associate degree programs, and two of its bachelor’s degree programs, rank among the Top 10 in the nation for graduating minority students. This includes degree programs in its School of Allied Health, School of Business and Accounting, School of Criminal Justice and School of Information Technology. Also recognized was Monroe’s School of Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts, which has garnered more than 500 awards since its launch in 2009 and ranked seventh in the nation for the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded to minority students.

“We take great pride that a college of our relatively small size continually ranks among the top in the nation for graduating minority students,” said Stephen Jerome, President of Monroe College. “We believe in the power of education to change lives, and are strongly committed to providing our diverse student population with the resources they need to excel academically and professionally. We promote an inclusive, supportive culture at Monroe and this reflects in our high completion rates.”

Diverse: Issues In Higher Education, which focuses on diversity in U.S. higher education, annually releases its list of the Top 100 Minority Degree Producers. These rankings, now in their fifth year, utilize the most recent available Department of Education data to identify the U.S. higher education institutions that confer the most degrees to African-American and Hispanic students each year.
Edith Banks: Monroe’s “Fun Aunt” Makes Things Happen

It's quite easy to feel at home while in the Student Activities Office. It is a welcoming environment, with candies and snacks, a warm hug, and zealous staff with bright smiles who meet you at the door. The enthusiastic and passionate Edith Banks, affectionately known as the “fun aunt on campus” has been the director of the Student Activities Office at the Bronx Campus for the past five years. She believes in bringing out the best in people, pushing them to be all they can be, and getting them to go beyond what they think. She wants them to achieve more than just what a limited imagination offers.

The Student Activities Office is a place where there is something for everyone, with 26 clubs on the Bronx and New Rochelle campuses. The office seeks to connect students to various clubs or activities that may interest them. There is much to learn at college outside the classroom setting and that's where the student activities office plays a pivotal role. Whether it is organizing the homecoming dance, freshmen orientation, bingo night, leadership training, or just a trip to Six Flags, the office is always busy.

What drives Ms. Banks is seeing the growth and maturation of students from freshmen orientation to graduation, seeing them develop their confidence, administrative skills, and leadership abilities. Ms. Banks observed that while an internship is necessary, one thing that makes a student stand out is participation and leadership in clubs and activities. She stated that, “Ultimately students who are connected to something are those who are generally successful.”

The Student Activities Office is not your normal nine-to-five place. The office is being “manned” by two women, Ms. Banks and her assistant Ms. Joane Birmingham, who do exceptional things. Kudos to them.

So the next time you're in King Hall stop by the Student Activities Office for a candy, a hug, or just a word of encouragement from Ms. Banks and her team.

Gaddy Hall Dedicated

Renowned New Rochelle educator Dr. James Gaddy returned to his roots in New Rochelle last week to officially open the latest dorm that bears his namesake. Gaddy Hall, a 74,000-square-foot, six-story building will house 300 students and features a cafeteria, study rooms, common area, classrooms and offices for faculty and administrators.

Marc Jerome, the executive vice president who oversees Monroe's New Rochelle campus, said that the building will serve students in a variety of ways. “Gaddy Hall provides students with the convenience of having both classrooms and a cafeteria located in the building where they reside.” This new facility reflects our continued commitment to providing students with an integrated and vibrant campus life.

Earlier this year, Monroe announced that the dorm would be dedicated to Gaddy, a longtime leader of the New Rochelle School District. He spent nearly three decades molding the minds of city school children. “I’m honored to have my name associated with a college that is committed to the academic success of its students,” Gaddy said about the distinction. “Monroe’s partnership with New Rochelle is exemplified in the construction of this very building.”

Gaddy, who retired from the district in 1992, has been a member of Monroe’s Board of Trustees for nearly three decades.

“He has left an indelible mark on the education system and we are proud to honor and recognize Monroe’s partnership with him,” Stephen Jerome, president of the college, said. “He played a key role in helping the New Rochelle school system and has provided invaluable insight that has aided the development of our own institution.”

New Rochelle New Year

Hundreds of balloons rained down on hundreds of people at New Roc City’s Fifth Annual “Ring in the New Year at Noon” event Dec. 31st.

The family-friendly celebration, a G-rated Times Square-like party, geared toward families with children ages two to ten, featured face painting, arts and crafts, sports demonstrations, clowns, snacks, magicians and games, along with lots of happy faces and revelry. Not to mention the release of balloons at 12 p.m. sharp.

Participating sponsors included FunFusion Games and Rides, Monroe College, Premier Martial Arts, ModeBS Sporting Goods, Buffalo Wild Wings, Applebees, Marriott Residence Inn, Stop N’ Shop, Planet Fitness, Gamestop, Regal IMAX Theater, LAZ Parking, and the New Rochelle BID. Families received special offers from participating sponsors along with free snacks, prizes and more. “Ring in the New Year at Noon” was held in association with the New Rochelle Business Improvement District and its BID Family Day event series.
Soccer Nationals

In 2014 the two Monroe Mustangs soccer teams were as good as can be. The Monroe women were national champions and the men were national finalists and both teams made their mark in dramatic fashion through the playoffs right into the final matches. Both teams were also Regional and District champions as they navigated their way into their respective NJCAA Division I National Tournaments.

"This was a special year for our soccer teams," said Athletic Director Bert Shillingford, "and winning championships is not only about what's happening on the field. Monroe's administrative, academic, and training staffs also get a lot of credit because they operate in a championship fashion, too," he said. "On the field, our coaches are as superb as are our student athletes who wear the 'Monroe' across their chests with great pride and clearly, with great success."

Ironically, in their national semifinals, within a space of 24-hours in different cities – the men in Prescott, AZ and the women in Melbourne, FL - both Monroe soccer teams were faced with scoreless, sudden-death overtime games that eventually came down to the penalty kick phase, where anything can happen. But each of Monroe's two goalkeepers were equal to the challenge, each stopping two opposing kicks to send their teams to the finals.

Then in the women's final, #2 seeded Monroe faced the top-seed, Iowa Western, the team that gave the 18-1-1 Mustangs their only loss in the second game of the season and the same team that ousted Monroe from the nationals a year before. That game was tied 1-1 and it too went to sudden death, and there Monroe's brilliant Brazilian sophomore Ana Carol Rodrigues scored the title-winner on a penalty kick.

In the men's final, the #10-seeded Mustangs drew some difficult luck as one of their players was called for a red card on a controversial play in the 40th-minute, forcing them to play the #4-seeded Tyler (TX) shorthanded for almost 50 minutes. But 13-4-1 Monroe didn't disappoint, notching a goal to cut the lead to 2-1 late in the second half and narrowly missing taking the title on two clean chances to score in the final minute.

In 2010 the men were 19-2, Region and District Champions, and finished in fourth-place in the NJCAA Division I Men's National Tournament. In 2011 they were 14-2-1 and were national finalists. In 2012 and 2014 they won Region championships.

As a Division III team, the Monroe women won Region titles in 2010 and 2011 and were national finalists in 2011. In 2012, they moved up to Division I and became a top-ten ranked team within their first month. They won Region and District titles in 2013 and played in the national tournament.

"Winning is a habit that we would really not like to break," said Mr. Shillingford. "To keep things going in the future we will all have to continue to work hard to not only bring in top players, but to also make sure they are solid in the classroom as well as on the field. It's that commitment to success that makes the Monroe Mustangs what we are."

International Students Feed Homeless

On a recent Saturday the Monroe van pulled up to the home of Angelyn and George Forbes-Freeze and 11 international students got out, eager to begin their day of community service. After a breakfast meeting to discuss the intricacies of menu, division of labor, assignment of preparation space, and the objective – to create a delicious meal for the occupants of the Jan Peek House, a homeless shelter in Peekskill, NY - the chopping, washing, mixing, spicing and cooking began.

It was a day of sharing not only cultures and ideals, but also questions about how people can become homeless and what the community can do to support their recovery. Along the way, we learned how to prepare Moroccan couscous, cooked Chinese vegetable soup, listened to lovely music played on the piano, found the right space for our Muslim students to pray, and learned phrases in Japanese, Chinese, and Korean. The weather cooperated, so we could eat outside before delivering the meal. The recipients were very grateful, and said they could tell it was made with love. Their obvious pleasure and thanks made all of the hours of work worth every minute. We all felt wonderful!