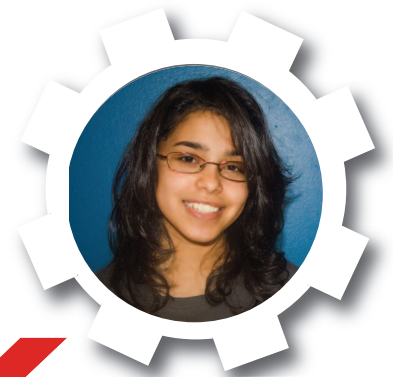


TECH talk

DECEMBER 2009



Unlimited Opportunities on Display

It was a proud night. Students were proud of their program areas and the equipment and projects on display there. Parents and instructors felt proud of the knowledge and skills exhibited by the students. Staff



members were proud of the state-of-the-art facility and the large crowd of attendees. And representatives of higher education institutions were proud of the learning opportunities they extended to future graduates.

The proud evening described above was October 22, when approximately 1,000 people attended RMCTC's combined Open House/Career Awareness Night.

The Open House represented a wonderful opportunity to showcase the many exciting things happening in career and technology education today. Eighth- and ninth-grade students in Reading and Muhlenberg school districts enjoyed seeing the school, especially the labs and shop areas of the 31 programs of study. Current students in grades 10, 11, and 12 and their families vis-



ited with instructors and observed demonstrations of tools and techniques pertaining to various career fields.

The Career Awareness Night portion of the evening featured displays by 13 institutions of higher learning and

continued on page 2 ➤

INSIDE

FROM THE DIRECTOR:
PSSA SCORES ON THE RISE 2

WHO'S NEW?
AND MORE FACULTY NEWS 3

WORK-BASED LEARNING:
KARINA IS BREWING UP
A SWEET CAREER 4

ALUMNI PROVE
YOU CAN GO HOME AGAIN 5

OPEN HOUSE/CAREER
AWARENESS NIGHT 6

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**Reading
Muhlenberg**
CAREER & TECHNOLOGY CENTER

FROM THE director



Recently, we celebrated our PSSA test results after learning that our students' reading and math scores increased more than twenty-three and thirty-eight percent respectively, over the prior year. Some might ask why we are so worried about academic achievement, when RMCTC is a technical school. It is our belief that students who possess strong academic and technical skills will best meet the future needs of our business community.

In addition, teachers are working very hard with their seniors to ensure they do well on the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) assessment. Last year, sixty-eight (68) percent of our seniors tested at the competent

or advanced level, scoring higher than the state average for all CTE students!

The career and technical education landscape has changed dramatically in the past five years. Emphasis is being placed on accountability for increasing both academic and technical skills of our students, and RMCTC students are rising to the challenge! Collectively, we continue to seek opportunities for business and industry organizations to audit our programs of study in an effort to earn program accreditation. In some cases, this results in students having the opportunity to earn industry certifications prior to graduating from high school. Possessing strong academic and technical skills in addition to industry-recognized certifications will ensure our students have the skills and credentials to pursue work or continue their education at the post-secondary level.

I'm thrilled to be a witness to the changes being implemented by the faculty and to watch our students respond in such a positive way. I hope you are equally challenged to find a way to be part of the change occurring at RMCTC; don't be afraid to ask how you can help!

Gerald P. Witmer Jr.

Gerald P. Witmer Jr. | Administrative Director



> Unlimited Opportunities on Display *continued*

the U.S. Army. Also included were two financial aid presentations that outlined the types of aid available, the application process, and the deadlines for submitting paperwork. "Career Awareness Night was all about exposing students, parents, and guardians to the many post-secondary opportunities that are available to students who complete programs at RMCTC," explained **Donna Henderson**, guidance counselor.

An underlining objective of the event is to battle the outdated notion that RMCTC is the same as

the "vo-tech" of years ago. That notion is out of touch with the reality of modern career and technology centers. The RMCTC of today is a high-tech, state-of-the-art facility where students prepare for a wide variety of careers, many of which require further education and training. "RMCTC students have plenty of post-secondary educational opportunities available to them, and Open House/Career Awareness Night makes that point in a dramatic, tangible way," said **Gerald Witmer**, administrative director.

continued on back page >



faculty

NEWS

New Staff

- **Patricia Adams** is a former Muhlenberg High School and RMCTC cosmetology student who is returning to teach in the Cosmetology program. Adams obtained a B.S. in education from Kutztown University and operates a salon in the Bernville Area.
- **Diana Albarran** has been hired as the administrative assistant to the supervisor of CTE. Albarran received an associate's degree in specialized business from PACE Institute. She will be supporting the administration by tracking student attendance and truancy issues in addition to welcoming visitors in the main office.
- **Holly Keller** has been hired as a fiscal clerk. She is a graduate of Schuylkill Valley High School and received a B.S. in business management/banking and finance from Alvernia University. Keller most recently worked at Brown Engineering as the bookkeeper.
- **Kelly McCool** is a former Wilson High School student and graduate of Penn State University with a B.S. in education. She has been hired to work in the Learning Resource Center in support of math achievement. McCool worked previously at A.J. Morrison Elementary School in Philadelphia.

- **Justin Potteiger** is a former Reading High School and RMCTC culinary arts student who is returning to teach in the Culinary Arts program. He attended Penn College of Technology and received a Culinary Arts Certificate. Potteiger recently worked as the head chef at the Berks County Intermediate Unit.
- **Dennis Sites** has been hired to teach Auto Body Technology. Sites is a Blue Mountain High School graduate and has more than 10 years' experience in the auto collision field, last working in a management role at Schuylkill Haven Body and Fender Repair. For the past 10 years, he's also served as an EMT.
- **Heather Yobb** has been hired to teach Early Childhood Education. She is a graduate of Neshaminy High School and received a B.S. in human development and family studies from Penn State University. Yobb formerly worked in the Muhlenberg School District teaching in the family and consumer science department and most recently served as director of administration at the Goddard School in Wyomissing.

New Assignments

- **Tina Delgado** recently accepted the position of administrative assistant to the assistant director. In her new role, Delgado will be supporting the administration by tracking student discipline, completing school reports, answering phones, and welcoming visitors in the main office.
- **Quan Borrero**, a former RMCTC welding student, recently accepted the position of safety and security officer. In this new role, Borrero will be putting his criminal justice degree from Berks Technical Institute to good use. He will also help provide CPR and EMT training to our students.
- **Lisa Hughes**, a former LRC paraprofessional, has been hired as a math integration specialist to support the math achievement of our students. Hughes has a B.S. in accounting from Kutztown University and secondary education certification through Alvernia University.

Congratulations on Your Retirement

Keith Manmiller, culinary arts instructor, recently retired following 18 years of service at RMCTC. Keith is a former Muhlenberg High School and RMCTC culinary arts student. There are many outstanding people working in the food service industry who have been trained under Keith's watchful eye. Thank you, Chef Manmiller, for making a difference in our community!

work-based LEARNING

Brewing Up a Sweet Career



“Saturday Night Live” skits and “Seinfeld” episodes popularized the persona of the short order cook or eatery employee whose harsh treatment of customers makes them fearful of accidentally violating the prescribed ordering procedure. Stand-up comics continue to make fun of the confusion experienced by customers confronted with the complicated menu options in a gourmet coffee shop.

Karina Gonzalez is doing her part to contradict those stereotypes of contemporary life. She’s not on TV playing to a worldwide audience, but she’s doing her best to provide exemplary customer service on a local scale.

Karina, 19, is a senior at Reading High School and a third-year student in the Baking and Pastry Arts program at Reading Muhlenberg CTC. As part of a Cooperative Education (co-op) work-based learning experience that began in September, she has been working at The Tower Café in The Reading Hospital and Medical Center.

“In my role as barista, I prepare and serve espresso-based coffee drinks,” explained Karina. “Of course, my job entails many other duties as well,” she added. In addition to cappuccinos and lattes, she also concocts smoothies and flavored frozen drinks. She takes orders, serves pastries and desserts, handles stocking and clean-up chores, operates the cash register, and completes “other duties as assigned.”



While Karina is busy accomplishing the various tasks of her job, she is conscientiously fulfilling an even more important objective: providing excellent customer service. According to **Tracy Stettler**, Baking and Pastry Arts instructor, Karina’s product knowledge, salesmanship, accuracy on the register, and positive personality all work together to give customers the service they expect. Those are all things, in addition to baking techniques, that are taught and stressed in the RMCTC program. “There is a bakery case in our cafeteria that provides the students with opportunities to develop product knowledge and experience in selling,” said Stettler. “Karina was well prepared for her co-op responsibilities.”

That preparation has served Karina well on the job. **Kathy Swope**, work-based learning coordinator at RMCTC, has received very positive feedback from the supervisory staff at The Tower Café. They praise Karina’s politeness, willingness to do what needs to be done, accuracy on the register, and safety consciousness. Swope visits the work site once a month to check in with Karina and her supervisor. “Cooperative Education is a unique opportunity for students to take the skills learned at the CTC and apply those skills in the work world,” explained Swope.

While receiving a paycheck might be Karina’s favorite feature of the co-op, she enjoys other aspects of the job as well. The fast paced environment of the café keeps her on her toes and prevents boredom. She especially enjoys getting to know her regular customers and serving families who are visiting loved ones in the hospital. Now that sounds like a sentiment that would add new meaning to the popular culture surrounding gourmet coffee shops—a positive attitude and a friendly smile.





Yes, You CAN Go Home Again



George Webber, the protagonist of Thomas Wolfe's novel *You Can't Go Home Again*, comes to the conclusion at the end of the book that you cannot return to the comfort and familiarity of your past. Twenty-one RMCTC alumni, however, have disproved this notion by returning as employees to the school they enthusiastically and affectionately call home.

Sewing and Clothing Manufacturing teacher **Carol Keiser** described her sentiments this way: "There are no words to express the feelings I have to be teaching at the same school where I once was a student. Part of me always remained here, almost like never leaving home. I am blessed to return to my alma mater to complete my circle of life experiences."

Keiser, a member of the Class of 1970, did alterations during a co-op at a dress shop on Penn Street, completed the Textiles and Clothing program, and embarked on a lifelong sewing career. "My entire working life has revolved around the skills and training I received as a student in the sewing program," said Keiser. But why return to RMCTC? "Passionate about sewing, I felt I could give back a small part of what I have taken from here," she explained.

As a bricklayer, **Mike Torres** worked on renovating two local buildings of his-

Front Row: Daniel Millan, Linda Sayer, Quan Borrero, Patricia Adams, Kathleen Swope, Demetria Gonzalez, Tracy Stettler, Carol Keiser, Antonio Serrano

Back Row: Michael Hurst, Michael Torres, Justin Potteiger, Francis Radka, James Focht, Roy Spinka, Tina Delgado

Missing: Kevin Becker, Jeffrey Manley, Stephen Weber, Carlos Mercado, Todd Pugliese

torical significance: the Berks County Courthouse and the Abraham Lincoln Hotel. Now in his ninth year as a teacher in the Construction cluster, Torres sees his job "as a chance to help young people in my community have the same opportunities I had and as a way to possibly help create more success stories. I can honestly say that I am proud of my school, and that there is no other place I would rather be," said Torres.

Frank Radka, Upholstery teacher, does not wax nostalgic about his alma mater, but he is quick to give credit where credit is due. "As a former student I obtained the basic training that helped me start a career in upholstery," he explained. "I could not have succeeded without the training and encouragement that was extended to me at RMCTC."

Tina Delgado, administrative assistant, has worked at RMCTC for 20 years and shares the feelings expressed by her colleagues. "I am very excited to be working for my alma mater. Knowing that my career here is due to the program I chose makes my job more meaningful than working for another company," she said.

Even staff who have enjoyed diverse careers feel at home at the school and have high hopes for its students.

Quan Borrero, who learned welding as a student, now serves as RMCTC's safety and security officer. "I'm proud to be part of the staff," he said. "I want students to graduate with good memories of their positive experiences here."

Linda Gaylor Sayer studied Health Occupations but later pursued her first love of cosmetology and returned to RMCTC to teach that subject. "My co-workers and I form a great friendship and partnership committed to excellence," she said. "Being here brings back great memories and I hope that my students leave here with great memories also."

While it is true that you cannot turn back the hand of time to recapture your youth, it is possible to return to a familiar place that provides both happy memories and prospects of a bright future. RMCTC is such a place, and its alumni-staff members feel right at home there.



board members

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John P. Santoro, Jr.
Keith R. Stamm
Jaime Wertz, Esq.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center, in partnership with our diverse community, sponsoring districts, and business and industry, is committed to providing quality career and technical education, resulting in opportunities for students to gain employment, pursue post-secondary education, and develop an appreciation for lifelong learning.



Reading Muhlenberg

CAREER & TECHNOLOGY CENTER

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Opportunities on Display *continued*

Helping students understand the many advantages of career and technology education and the virtually unlimited possibilities it represents is a multi-step process at RMCTC, beginning with the Open House/Career Awareness Night. In early November, staff members make presentations to school classes. They explain the programs and activities of the school and answer students' questions. During November and December, 9th-graders travel to RMCTC to visit three program areas of interest to them. After selecting their course of study, students begin the enrollment process in January.

"The feeling of the night was 'Let's show them what we do; let's demonstrate what we know,'" said Henderson of the recent Open House/Career Awareness Night. "The students, faculty, and staff share a great deal of pride in the school, and it was obvious for all to see."



post-secondary participants

Alvernia University
Berks Technical Institute
Johnson & Wales University
Kutztown University
PACE Institute
Reading Area Community College
Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology
The Art Institutes
The Restaurant School at Walnut Hill College
Triangle Tech
United States Army
WyoTech
Yorktowne Business Institute and School of Culinary Arts
YTI Career Institute

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