

TECH talk

DECEMBER 2011



INSIDE



FROM THE DIRECTOR

ALUMNI FOCUS:
MICHAEL BERKEL
ILLISSA CUNNINGHAM
BRAD BAUSCHER

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LAW & ORDER

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Reading Muhlenberg
CAREER & TECHNOLOGY CENTER

RMCTC Earns National Award

Contrary to popular perception, Reading occasionally earns national attention for positive reasons. Thanks to RMCTC, that is exactly what happened this past summer.

The Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center was selected as an Outstanding Technology Centers That Work (TCTW) Center. The distinction was based on the success of center leaders and teachers in improving practices and raising student achievement. **Dave Spence**, president of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), presented the award at

the 25th Annual High Schools That Work (HSTW) Staff Development Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, on July 20, 2011.

Reading Muhlenberg CTC was one of only seven TCTW centers in the nation to receive the 2011 Outstanding TCTW Center award. To be recognized for the honor, a center had to be nominated by the TCTW state coordinator or by an SREB director for a noteworthy accomplishment.

During the past school year, 72 percent of RMCTC students scored "advanced" and a total of 87 percent scored either "competent" or "advanced" on the National Occupational Competency (NOCTI)

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FROM THE **director**



It is becoming increasingly competitive to earn acceptance into many of the career and technical education programs at Reading Muhlenberg CTC. At the start of the school year, RMCTC had 1,252 students enrolled, with 609 of those students being new to the school. For the first time ever, after receiving a total of 867 initial applications, we

had to turn some students away. This speaks volumes about the quality of our programs, the outstanding work of our staff, and the success of our graduates. For those students interested in attending RMCTC who will be submitting applications over the next couple of months, we will be looking closely at your career goals, attendance records, grades, discipline records, and a recommendation provided by your school counselor.

Why are so many students interested in an RMCTC education? I believe students and parents

are becoming increasingly aware of the quality of our programs, the outcomes of our students, and the opportunities that exist to pursue a post-secondary education upon graduation. As noted in the cover story, RMCTC was recently named an Outstanding Technology Centers That Work site. RMCTC was recognized for this award due primarily to the increase in the number of students scoring “advanced” or “competent” on the National Occupational Competency assessment. This end-of-program technical assessment is administered to all CTE students in Pennsylvania at the conclusion of their senior year. During the past year, 72 percent of seniors scored “advanced” while a total of 87 percent of seniors scored either “advanced” or “competent,” representing an increase from 31 percent and 44 percent just four years ago!

How are we doing this? We have great students, an extremely dedicated and hard working staff, outstanding support from the Muhlenberg and Reading School districts, and a community of stakeholders who believe in and support our vision for school improvement. Moving forward, I am confident that the staff will continue to work hard to be innovative in our approach to providing a high-quality career and technical education program!

Gerald P. Witmer Jr.

Gerald P. Witmer Jr. | Administrative Director

TCTW Award continued...

Assessment. This assessment is given to all 12th-grade career and technical education students at the conclusion of their senior year. According to **Gerald P. Witmer Jr.**, RMCTC administrative director, “Four years ago, only 31 percent of students scored at the “advanced” level, while 44 percent of students earned “competent” or “advanced” scores. Through the Center’s efforts to adopt the principles of the TCTW model, we have seen significant improvement in the quality of our curriculum and programs, the ability of our faculty to teach under the TCTW model, and student outcomes as demonstrated by an increase in achievement. The staff and students have worked hard and they absolutely deserve this special recognition.”

“This center has shown what can be accomplished to improve student performance and readiness for college and careers by deeply implementing the TCTW model for strengthening curriculum and instruction,” said **Gene Bottoms**, SREB senior vice president. “The center illustrates the spirit of change and the gains in performance that TCTW advocates and supports through assessment, staff development, and technical assistance.”

The next time someone remarks that Reading captures only negative headlines, you may want to point out this story and the national honor earned by RMCTC’s students and educators.



Michael Berkel

DESIGNED FOR SUCCESS

RMCTC CLASS OF 2007

PROGRAM: *Advertising Design & Commercial Art*

CAREER INFO: *Lead Designer, Aureus Idea Firm, Manayunk; Designer/Marketer, Berks Eye Physicians and Surgeons, Wyomissing; and Founder/Creative Director, MERK House, Reading*

Mike Berkel likes to keep things “flowing and fun.” Nevertheless, he has a lot of irons in the fire and is serious about his work. “I take on many responsibilities on any given day but am mainly in charge of all creative production and management,” said Mike. His duties include doing research for projects, creating concepts and designs, conducting client meetings, and networking with vendors. He enjoys it all.

“My experience at RMCTC played a pivotal role in my career,” Mike stated. “It prepared me technically and mentally for the next level of my education,” he said. After high school, Mike earned an associate’s degree in graphic design at the Art Institute in York.

He credits his RMCTC instructor, **Steve Simons**, with providing him with real-world learning experiences. “He structured the lessons as if we were a real firm — not only when it came to drawing or shooting photos or video, but also how to work with different media on the computer, which is always the last tool to be used with our artwork,” explained Mike.

Mike chose to attend the CTC because he preferred the hands-on approach to learning and wanted to find out how to take certain areas of interest to a professional level. His advice to current students is to “take it seriously, pay attention, and you’ll not only learn a trade and go far but hopefully find something you’ll be passionate about.”



Illissa Cunningham
HER PLANS INCLUDE HO

RMCTC CLASS OF 2001

PROGRAM: *Drafting*

CAREER INFO: *Estimator/Project Manager, Floorcoverings, Landover, MD*

Ten years after graduating from high school, **Illissa Cunningham** is still using the drafting skills she learned at RMCTC.

In her work as an estimator/project manager for a floor covering company, Illissa measures residential and commercial spaces for new flooring. She then drafts floor plans to provide accurate square footage estimates of the amount of new flooring material required. Installers use her floor plans to complete the installation process.

In addition to her drafting duties, Illissa also has client-contact responsibilities. She recommends flooring products to customers based on their needs and desires and provides them with proposals for projects. “It’s a unique position since I do not have to sit behind a desk every day. I enjoy being in the field and meeting new people,” said Illissa.

After transferring from another vocational-technical school, Illissa studied drafting at Reading Muhlenberg CTC during her senior year as a Holy Name High School student. She furthered her education at Temple University, where she earned a bachelor of science degree in architecture.

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Brad Bauscher

A NEED FOR SPEED

RMCTC CLASS OF 2010

PROGRAM: *Automotive Technology*

CAREER INFO: *Automotive Technician,
Lee Myles Transmissions and Auto-Care, Reading*

Since the time he was a young boy playing with his Matchbox collection, **Brad Bauscher** knew what he liked—cars. “When I was able to enroll at RMCTC, it was an easy decision,” said Brad. Now that he is working in the automotive industry, he has no regrets about that choice. “My experience at RMCTC provided me with a vast amount of basic automotive knowledge and prepared me for post-secondary education where I easily moved into advanced levels of learning,” he said. Brad earned an associate’s degree in automotive and business management from WyoTech in Blairsville, Pennsylvania.

Brad works as an automotive technician at Lee Myles Transmissions and AutoCare in Reading. He

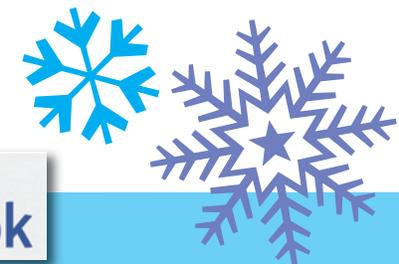


diagnoses problems with cars, makes repairs, and performs state inspections. His favorite part of the job is the constant and fast-paced rate of change—in what he needs to learn and in the way vehicles are made. “It’s a challenge to keep up with all the new technology,” he explained. One way he adds to his skill set is by taking advantage of specialized training videos available on the Internet.

Looking back on his time at RMCTC, Brad values the effort expended by teachers and school administrators to make learning fun and to provide students with great facilities and opportunities. He appreciates how his instructor, **Sam Morraco**, always had vehicles for him to work on and how he stressed the importance of keeping the shop clean and organized. Those are good habits that Brad now recognizes as having a direct impact on his productivity on the job.

Brad Bauscher is in his element working with vehicles. Like them, he himself is on the move, learning new techniques, improving his skills. He has a need for speed—to keep pace with the exciting, ever-changing world of some of his favorite things—cars.

When asked if she had any advice for students who may be considering RMCTC, Illissa had a few suggestions. “If they are undecided as to which career they want to pursue, I would recommend that they do lots of research into what certain careers require in terms of education and the duties and tasks to be performed. They’d be wise to also research the monetary compensation they could expect from various career choices,” she said. Then she added one more bit of advice, somewhat removed from the quantitative, practical realm of measurements and blueprints, “I would advise them to follow their hearts and dreams and strive to achieve their desires,” said Illissa.



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Law & Order: Raymond Acevedo

TV crime dramas, such as CSI, are immensely popular shows because they portray the inner workings of police departments in a glamorous and exciting way. Most people rely on television to provide them with a behind-the-scenes peek into the world of law enforcement. **Raymond Acevedo**, however, is not like most people; he experiences the action up close and personal.

Raymond, 18, is in his third year of study in the Public Safety and Security program at Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center. After attending Reading High School in the morning, he reports for work at the Communications Office of the Reading Police Department. That's where some real-life police drama takes place—with Raymond right in the middle of it.

As 911 and non-emergency calls come into the switchboard, Raymond and other dispatchers answer those calls. They run the gamut from life-and-death emergencies to complaints about barking dogs or noisy neighbors. The dispatchers' job is to obtain vital information about the situation so that an appropriate response can be put into action.

Raymond trained for the role by observing professional dispatchers and listening in on their conversa-



tions. As he began to take calls himself, a dispatcher was always at his side, coaching him on what to say and how best to help the caller. He learned effective techniques for diffusing emotions and handling diverse situations. In spite of sometimes having a nervous feeling about answering phone calls, Raymond enjoys the work. "It's exciting, not boring," he said. "There can be a shooting one minute and something far less serious the next. Every day is something new and different."

In addition to answering phone calls and interacting directly with people who come to the desk sergeant's window in City Hall, Raymond also uses the Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network (CLEAN) to research driver license and motor vehicle information, criminal history records, stolen property files, etc. He often uses the computer to check for arrest warrants and scofflaws, who are individuals who owe unpaid fines.

Brenda Osorio, communications supervisor with the Reading Police Department, considers Raymond's co-op a win-win situation. "This is a great opportunity for a young person," she said. "Even if Ray doesn't pursue a career in police work, the experience he gets here will always be worthwhile."

Raymond agrees with that assessment and plans to apply the lessons he's learned in Reading to his next career move. After completing his RMCTC course of study in firefighting, emergency medical services, and law enforcement, he will report, on June 18, 2012, to Parris Island, South Carolina, to begin his training as a U.S. Marine. It seems that Raymond is destined to be wherever the action is and to do his part in serving the public good.



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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.

“There's plenty of risk in sending a kid to college! Forty percent of students who enroll in a 4-year college degree program don't graduate within six years, and probably never will.”

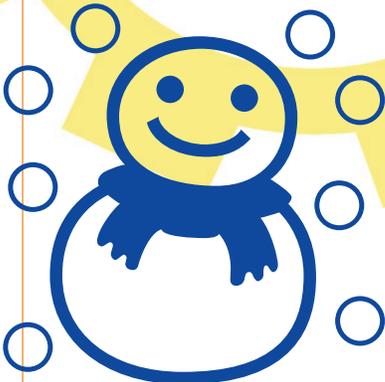
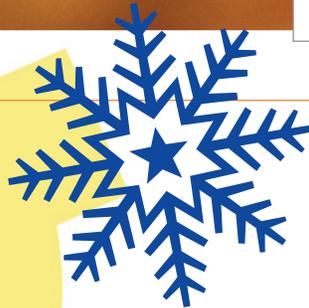
ALEX TABARROK, GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY ECONOMIST



It is the policy of the Reading Muhlenberg CTC not to discriminate on the basis of gender, disability, race, color, and national origin in its educational and vocational programs, activities, or employment as required by Title IX, Section 504 and Title VI.

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