



MCC students welcome the James Monroe children, while Principal Lynda Zapoticzny hugs one her students on the first day back.

Photos by Rob Rivera



## Welcome Neighbor: Monroe Elementary Takes Over South Buildings

It was a cool Saturday evening in March when a carelessly discarded cigarette caused the destruction of James Monroe Elementary School in Edison. Fire engulfed the building, creating a six-alarm inferno.

Before the embers had cooled, school officials were asking the question: where can we hold classes now? They didn't want to divide the school up. The kids wanted to stay with their friends and teachers.

The next day, Middlesex County College President Joann La Perla-Morales called Edison Superintendent Richard O'Malley to ask if the College could help in any way.

Space, he said. The school needed classroom space.

Dr. La Perla-Morales spoke with Donald Drost, the MCC executive director of facilities management, and they felt that two vacant buildings might suffice.

So that afternoon, Lynda Zapoticzny, Monroe's principal, visited the campus and toured South I and South II. The buildings had housed Financial Aid, the Scholarships Office, Equal Opportunity Fund, Minority Student Affairs, Health and Safety, some classrooms and a machine shop, but all had been relocated. The buildings were slated to be demolished to make way for a state-of-the-art science building, which is scheduled to open in 2016.

Mrs. Zapoticzny thought the two

buildings would make a wonderful temporary home for James Monroe. Now all it would take is a monumental effort to get the buildings ready.

They started at 4 a.m., cleaning, ripping out partitions, replacing tile, restoring electricity and water, reinstalling bathroom fixtures, and many other tasks. It was a herculean effort, but in about 36 hours, the MCC facilities staff had created a school. The James Monroe sign, which hadn't burned, was transported to MCC and installed.

"As a community college, this is what we do – assist the community in times of need," Mr. Drost said.

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# MCC Student Newspaper Wins Awards in Collegiate Contest

Quo Vadis, the MCC student newspaper, recently won second place in the General Excellence category at the New Jersey Collegiate Press Association. The contest honors student newspapers from two- and four-year colleges and universities in the state. In addition, seven staff members were cited for excellence in specific areas.

"I'm really thrilled with the awards," said Melissa Edwards, the advisor.

"I'm very happy for all of the writers, photographers and editors, but I am most impressed with the overall excellence award. It reflects their hard work and dedication."

Kim Silva, the editor-in-chief, took second place in news writing; Ben Rodger was awarded first place in Sports Writing; Sourav Chatterjee and Rob Rivera won third place for Photography. Quo Vadis' website, administered by Katherine Rivera, took

first place in that category.

The publication also won first place in Layout and Design, and cited Mr. Chatterjee, Mr. Rodger, Julia Farawell and Collin Kahn for their efforts.

## Notables

**Mary-Pat Maciolek**, chairperson of the Hotel, Culinary Arts, and Dietetics Department, recently received the Outstanding Dietetics Educator Award, given by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. She received the award in recognition of achievements as an educator, teacher, mentor, and leader in dietetics education. It was presented at the Nutrition and Dietetic Educators and Practitioners Area Seven meeting in Boston on April 3.

She served as the New Jersey Dietetic Association president and treasurer and she is currently in her second term in the academy's House of Delegates representing New Jersey. She has been chairperson of the Middlesex department since 2006.

**Santi Buscemi**, professor of English, recently published an article on how his research into Luigi Capuana's "The Marquis of Roccaverdina" led to a meeting with Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. The article, in the Times of Sicily, can be found on [www.timesofsicily.com/meeting-antonin-scalia/](http://www.timesofsicily.com/meeting-antonin-scalia/).

Professor Buscemi mailed the justice a copy of his Capuana translation of "Sicilian Tales," a book of fairy tales. Justice Scalia replied that he knew Capuana well: his father had done his dissertation on the writer. He let Professor Buscemi borrow it, and when it came time for it to be returned, they agreed to meet. Professor Buscemi and his wife Elaine traveled to Washington last year. They had a wonderful visit.

"I felt as if I were sitting on my best friend's back porch, sipping a glass of good Sicilian wine," he wrote.



The MCC Alumni Association raised \$3,320 for the Alumni Scholarship Fund during An Evening of Good Taste for the Educated Palate, a restaurant food tasting in April. Around 20 restaurants served samples of their best dishes. From left, Wai Chan and Mary Lynch are served by Matt Martinko of Bonefish Grill.

## THIS MONTH AT MIDDLESEX

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### Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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The MCC step team, called Exitium, won first place at the fourth annual “Step or Die” competition at Temple University in Philadelphia in April. The team, which was established in 2013, bested step teams from New York, Philadelphia and Toronto.

“Two students, Aliyah Knighton and Charles Jones, founded Exitium in the fall of 2013 as a means of expressing excellence through the African art of stepping,” said Lori Johnson, the advisor. “With a purpose to educate, entertain and excel, Exitium has gained much recognition on campus.” Clockwise from lower left: Briana Willis, Imani Wheeler, Cristian Gonzalez, Charles Jones, Mohammad Paracha, Shanice Soley Nelson, Aliyah Knighton, Jasmine Beaufort. Photo by Rob Rivera.



## MCC Greets Monroe School Displaced by Fire

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Middlesex County Freeholder Director Ronald Rios thanked the College for its efforts.

“I cannot praise enough the good will and hard work of County College President Joann La Perla-Morales and her entire staff, who are working tirelessly to transform the space for

the youngsters,” he said. “Time and again, Middlesex County College takes a leadership role in the community, and for that we are grateful.”

Classes at Monroe had been canceled on March 24th and 25th. Wednesday, March 26 would be the first day at the new site. Television news vans – most broadcasting live – dotted

parking lot 3 since before dawn. The Monroe kids came in borrowed buses, hugged Mrs. Zapoticzny and walked through a gauntlet of MCC students waving a banner welcoming them and offering high fives. They entered the Physical Education Center where they were assigned classes; South I and II did not have enough rooms so some of the classes had to double up. Trailers would come a few weeks later.

Fifth grader Marisa Tufaro was excited about her first day at college. “I walked in the gym and I’m like ‘This is three times the size of my gym!’” she said. “And I’m like ‘holy cow, we could have a party in here!’”

Schools in Edison sent encouraging signs that were plastered all over the building and donations poured in: gift cards, supplies, and packages created by students in other schools.

“We are going to survive and we’re going to be better for this whole experience,” Mrs. Zapoticzny said. “Watching our children get off the buses and seeing their excitement made me realize that it really doesn’t matter where we are. I am so thankful for Middlesex County College. They have gone above and beyond. They have made us feel welcome. This is now the start of James Monroe, Chapter 2.”



Kids from other schools in Edison sent inspirational posters.

Photo by Rob Rivera



MCC students Joseph Reyes and Kevin Vazquez took first and second place respectively in a contest sponsored by Middlesex County to develop marketing materials to deter young people from distracted walking and cycling. The Middlesex County Comprehensive Traffic Safety Program was created to expand the county's ongoing traffic and pedestrian safety initiatives. In an effort to combat distracted walking and texting, it sponsored a contest for students at Middlesex and Rutgers University to create a radio public service announcement or a poster explaining the dangers of distracted walking and cycling. The county will use the winning entries in a marketing campaign. In the poster division, Mr. Reyes won \$500, Mr. Vazquez \$300, and Rutgers University student Rajwaun McKenzie \$200. In the audio public service announcement, MCC student Anthony Timbol won \$500 for first place, and MCC student Joseph Mastromarino won \$300 for second place. Discussing the winning entries are, from left: MCC President Joann La Perla-Morales, Freeholder H. James Polos, Mr. Vazquez and Mr. Reyes.



### **MCC Hoops Star Named Second Team All-American**

Quorea Pearyer, an MCC freshman guard, was named second team All-American by the National Junior College Athletic Association for Division III. She averaged 24 points per game, 11 rebounds, 4 assists and 2.5 steals. The Colts finished the season at 19-9.



### **The Coolest Students on Campus!**

Students in the Garde Manger class recently displayed their artistic side as they learned the fundamentals of ice carving. In this course, taught by Chef Walter Leffler, the students used chain saws to mold blocks of ice and then chisels to create the details. The class is part of the Culinary Arts degree and certificate program. Here, Helen Martinez shapes her block of ice.