

From left: College President Joann La Perla-Morales; Shirley Wachtel, Faculty Scholar Award winner; Vice President Mark McCormick; Kathy Shay, Teaching Excellence Award winner; Linda Scherr, dean of Arts and Sciences; and Sara Blomquist, Excellence in Teaching Part-Time Award winner.



Outstanding Professors Receive Awards for Teaching, Scholarship

Three outstanding professors at MCC were recently honored: Shirley Wachtel, professor of English, was selected as the 2017 Faculty Scholar; Kathy Shay, of the Mathematics Department, received the 2017 Excellence in Teaching Award; and Sara Blomquist, of the English Department, received the 2017 Excellence in Teaching Part Time Award.

“Dr. Wachtel approaches her scholarship in two major directions: her longtime research in survival and Holocaust studies and her work on reading pedagogy,” said Susan Altman, chair of the selection committee. “Her writing about survival and the Holocaust has recently been presented at the Middlesex County Chapter of Brandeis Women and at Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory, North Carolina where she did a reading of her book “My Mother’s Shoes” to more than 500 students who had

been assigned the book as part of their coursework. This scholarship has been shared with her MCC students and used to advance writing in her courses at the college.”

Dr. Wachtel’s pedagogical research on reading and basic skills resulted in the 2012 publication of “Spotlight on Reading.” In addition to her research and writing on pedagogical approaches in her discipline, Dr. Wachtel has also published extensively for adults and children, including works of fiction and poetry. Her poem, “A Summer’s Evening,” won second prize in the Dream Quest 2015 Contest.

“Her commitment to ongoing research in these important disciplines emphasizes Shirley’s unwavering commitment to lifelong learning and scholarship,” Professor Altman said.

Dr. Shay brings a variety of teaching methods into the classroom.

“She is truly a passionate master

teacher,” Professor Altman said. “A lifelong learner, Kathy brings innovation and new technologies to the classroom, continually working with students to instill a love of learning in addition to teaching them how to learn. As evidenced by her strong teaching philosophy and examples of her unique classroom resources, Kathy always seeks to improve her teaching. Committed to the success of her students, Kathy emphasizes the process of problem-solving and critical thinking. Student projects integrate not only mathematics, but also writing and communication and invite her students to embrace the discipline in innovative ways.”

Dr. Shay has also been involved in CELT, the Center for the Enrichment of Learning and Teaching, since its inception. CELT members serve as



MCC Besieged!

The College Center was invaded by all sorts of costumed characters during Korgaracon in April. Several hundred cosplay students interacted, shopped, played video games, attended workshops, listened to music and had a great time. It was organized by the MCC student club Geek Index.



Professors Cited for Classroom Excellence and Scholarship

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leaders in the College community by providing expertise, support and resources to enhance learning, teaching

and scholarship.

“Through CELT, Kathy shares her love of teaching and learning with the wider MCC faculty community,” Professor Altman said. “She challenges

us to think about how we approach pedagogy in the classroom and raises up all of our teaching.”

Professor Blomquist, an adjunct faculty member, emphasizes connectivity and multiple learning options as well as individual approaches to learning.

“She is one of the rare individuals blessed with both a compassionate heart and a flexible mind,” Professor Altman said. “Sara is a caring individual who stresses to her students the application of what they are learning in the classroom. Encouraging active learning, her project-based assignments create a strong sense of student engagement in her classroom. Using a variety of teaching resources, activities, rubrics and a unique first-day packet, Sara engages her students in innovative ways. She is committed to helping her students achieve success in their coursework and beyond.”

THIS MONTH AT MIDDLESEX

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Student Researches Water Quality, Earns Scholarship

Rachel Mahoney was used to getting nothing but “A”s in all her classes, so when she started in Microbiology in September, it was a rude awakening. A “B” was looming on the horizon. But she was quiet and too shy to speak with her professor. She was also a little overwhelmed, balancing a full load of classes and working two jobs: one at a restaurant and another as a peer mentor at MCC.

But she was also determined. She quit the restaurant job and focused on her studies. She got that A.

Even better, she summoned the courage to talk with her professor, Erin Christensen. Dr. Christensen saw potential in her student and asked if she’d like to participate in a research study.

“I didn’t know anything about microbiology or how it related to real life,” Ms. Mahoney said. “But I immediately said I was very interested

in this opportunity.”

The project was examining water samples in the Elizabeth Marina to check bacteria levels and to see if they have become resistant to antibiotics.

So, along with her research partner, Ms. Mahoney gathered six water samples, brought them back to the lab, and allowed them to grow. They then identified bacteria that grew from the

water samples using biochemical tests.

“We’re concerned that people toss old prescription drugs down the drain, or flush them down the toilet, which can get into the water system,” Dr. Christensen said.

“These drugs may affect the bacteria and make it resistant to antibiotics. This is not a good thing.”

The project confirmed that indeed there were resistant bacteria in the water.

“The bacteria may have picked up a gene that gives it the ability to be resistant to antibiotics,” Ms. Mahoney said. “We need further study to determine why they are there and whether they can spread their resistance to other bacteria in the water.”

Ms. Mahoney, who is graduating in May and transferring to Rutgers University, will be presented a \$3,000 scholarship from the New Jersey Water Environment Association at its annual conference in Atlantic City May 10. The scholarship committee lauded her work on the project.

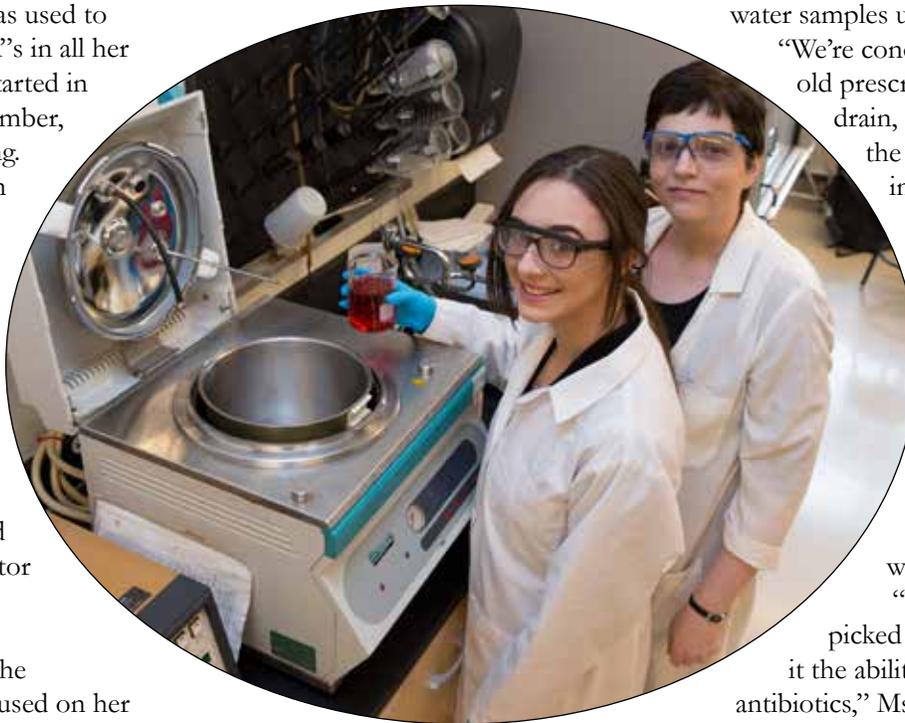
Dr. Christensen explained that while she oversees the research effort, she wants her students to work independently.

“I want them to take charge of the project and make their own decisions,” she said. “Rachel did a great job with it. Her passion stood out. I’m so proud of her.”

Ms. Mahoney, a biology major, said her research project has affected her career goals. She now wants to get an advanced degree and work as a research scientist in the environmental field.

“It makes me feel like I’m making a difference and doing something meaningful,” she said. “And that’s important to me.”

Rachel Mahoney (center) with Erin Christensen.



The Indian Students Association and Hindu Student Council celebrated the festival of Holi and Vaisakhi in April. On the day of Holi, friends and families get together, hug and put colors on each other. Vaisakhi, a festival of music and dance, is celebrated by Sikhs in India to mark the birth of religion.





The Visual Arts Student Exhibition, an annual showcase of the work of MCC students in art classes, kicked off with a reception. The exhibit includes drawing, painting, sculpture and mixed media. Here, Karen Famiglietti shows her untitled artwork to fellow artist Nick Baldie.

West Hall Earns Gold LEED Status as Environmentally Sound

West Hall, the new enrollment services center at Middlesex County College, has earned a LEED® gold rating from the United States Green Building Council, signifying its environmental attributes. LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is an internationally recognized mark of excellence that provides building owners with a framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations and

maintenance solutions.

“The LEED program encourages us to design buildings that have a low impact on the environment with optimal energy efficiency,” said Donald R. Drost, executive director of Facilities Maintenance at MCC. “It validates our efforts.”

The LEED report on the project looked at seven areas: sustainability sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, regional priority, materials and resources, indoor environmental

quality, and innovation. Some of the building’s features include water efficient plumbing fixtures, LED lights, and prominent windows to reduce excessive energy use. The building’s paint, floor and furniture are non-toxic, 30 percent of the materials used in construction included recycled content, construction waste was recycled.

This is MCC’s second building to receive a LEED rating; Crabiell Hall, which opened in 2011, was awarded a silver rank.

Library Presents Poetry and Examines Homelessness



Two programs at the Library celebrated spring and looked at homelessness. In the first, poets read from their works. Above, seated from left, Dan Zimmerman, Dan Weeks, Gregg Glory, Mat Spano; standing Emanuel di Pasquale, Hank Kalet, with Library Director Marilyn Ochoa. At left, a panel discussed homelessness in and around Middlesex County. Hank Kalet, an MCC adjunct professor and journalist, read from his book, “As an Alien in a Land of Promise,” and MCC student Alexander Lewis (speaking) shared his story as a 20-year-old who found himself homeless during a cold New Jersey winter. Representatives from nonprofits also spoke on how students can help.