SUSAN SOARES ’90 is leading Alex and Ani’s nationwide expansion.
Student recipients of the CCRI Alumni Association Book Award were honored during a breakfast with the board of directors on Feb. 11 at the Knight Campus in Warwick. Twenty-five awards redeemable at the CCRI Bookstore are available each semester of the academic year to benefit students with financial need. Funding for the awards comes from alumni donations and other fundraising efforts.

Pictured (from left) in the top row are Meghan Carides and Christopher Becote; in the middle row, Rebecca Edwards, Jason Bartlett and Jessica Fitzgerald; and in the bottom row, Kristen Casey and Carla Viera.
A message from the President

2014 is an exciting year for the Community College of Rhode Island; this fall we will kick off the college’s 50th anniversary celebration, taking a look back at the history of the state’s only community college and the great contributions of the many who have passed through its doors.

The anniversary celebration will begin with our Opening Day Convocation for faculty and staff on Aug. 28 and continue through our 50th commencement on May 15, 2015. In between, we are planning some fantastic events.

In the fall, we will host a special 50th anniversary edition of our annual CCRI Golf Classic. We also will bury a time capsule containing your memories and contributions (read more about this project on Page 2) and will celebrate our recently renovated Bobby Hackett Theater at the Knight Campus. Committees are hard at work planning other events, including a CCRI Day, tree plantings, an alumni gala and more. Details about all of the events surrounding our 50th anniversary will be coming soon.

CCRI has come a long way since it first opened in Providence with 325 students on Sept. 24, 1964. Today, with an enrollment of nearly 18,000, CCRI is the largest community college in New England and is a major contributor to Rhode Island’s economic development and the region’s workforce. Our alumni, now 62,000 strong, are an integral part of our history; we simply would not be here without you and your fellow students and alumni. We look forward to celebrating our 50th with you!

Ray M. Di Pasquale
President

A message from the President of the Alumni Association

Over the last 49 years, Community College of Rhode Island alumni have brought pride to the institution as they have become leaders in business, government and community. We truly are making a difference here in the Ocean State and, today, I invite you to share your time and talent in another way.

As CCRI’s 50th anniversary approaches, the Alumni Association invites you to become an Alumni Ambassador and join a networking group of CCRI graduates who will participate in programs to help CCRI students.

One way Alumni Ambassadors can help is by assisting the Alumni Association in updating its records and contact information. You might work to identify alumni who live in your community and, when you meet other alumni through your work or social networks, collect their names and contact information to share with the Association.

Other opportunities to help include mentoring or tutoring CCRI students and providing career information to students and alumni through workshops or networking events. Or you might provide job-shadowing opportunities at your workplace to introduce tomorrow’s workforce to your industry.

There are many ways you can assist your Alumni Association and, most importantly, current students who need and desire support from those who have been in their place and who can provide inspiration to them as they work toward their goals.

I hope you will join us. Please email alumni@ccri.edu for more information on how you can become involved in this effort.

Louis J. Saccoccio ’68
President
CCRI Alumni Association
Five who champion college’s mission honored

Gaining access to a college education can be a life-changing experience for students across all backgrounds and income levels. But as the audience at the Community College of Rhode Island Foundation’s annual Changing Lives celebration watched a moving video with testimonials from three current CCRI students, it was easy to see why making that experience an affordable one truly can be the most life-changing experience of all.

On Dec. 12, 285 Rhode Islanders attended the event at Rhodes on the Pawtuxet in Cranston, all coming together with the common goal of raising funds to support students who depend on the college’s affordable tuition and scholarship opportunities to build a brighter future for themselves and their families. Nearly $69,000 was raised through ticket sales, donations and various raffles to benefit students.

In addition to raising funds for this valuable cause, the attendees were also on hand to honor the work of four remarkable Rhode Islanders and one local business, all of whom work to help champion the college’s mission in their own deeds and in their larger community. This year’s honorees were Community Champions Sondra V. Ahlijian Pitts ’66 and husband Thomas E. Pitts Jr., Honorary Alumnus ’07; and Education Champions Sen. Hanna M. Gallo ’76, ’81 and Rep. Joseph M. McNamara.

“There are countless more stories of triumph, support and student success that explain why we do what we do,” President Ray Di Pasquale told the audience members after they viewed the video. “We are inspired by stories like these because they are personal, they matter to our community and they make Rhode Island stronger. Without supporters like you, who are leaving a legacy of support for higher education, we could not tell these stories.”
For students at the Community College of Rhode Island, the first step toward a new future comes when they walk in the doors of any of the college’s campuses. Here, they will earn the certificate or associate degree that will allow them to rise to the next level of their professional or academic life. But what guidance can a student expect when he or she wants to keep walking?

Since the former Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education established the Joint Admissions Agreement (JAA) program in 2003, Phyllis Harnick has been there to oversee such guidance given to students who wish to transfer from CCRI to the state’s other public institutions to continue their education. Harnick directs the program and works with advisers on the campuses of CCRI, the University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College to provide seamless transition plans for students.

“The goal of JAA is for students to be able to transfer in a way that is efficient,” said Harnick, noting that since the program’s inception, approximately 714 students have moved through its channels. “This means not taking courses that couldn’t then transfer and apply toward a bachelor’s degree, and for students to be able to best use their time, money and efforts.”

Harnick said that the program has grown considerably and now includes about 1,200 students. She said students first learn about the program through their high school guidance counselor via a CCRI admissions representative, or on campus when a student first meets an adviser. If the program seems like a good match, the student then can sign up with a JAA adviser and receive a transition plan listing the courses that must be taken at CCRI and how they will be credited at the bachelor’s degree-granting institution. Participation in JAA also offers a considerable financial incentive: Based upon GPA performance, students are eligible to receive up to a 30 percent tuition reduction for their first year at RIC or URI.

“We all know that a course is never wasted time, because you’re always learning. But for students who have limited resources and limited time and need to achieve a goal, JAA helps,” said Harnick, adding that the program’s yearly satisfaction survey indicates that students appreciate JAA’s “hassle-free” pathway to achieving their educational goals.

For Harnick and the JAA advisory staff, the reward is in seeing students get to where they want to go. Harnick said that she hopes students continue to reach out to the JAA staff after they leave CCRI. “We’re always interested in hearing about their success,” she said.

Two such success stories are Raúl Iriarte ’10 and Linda Rossi ’11. Iriarte graduated with a bachelor’s in secondary education from RIC in 2013, and Rossi is expecting to graduate from URI with a bachelor’s degree in psychology this spring. Both participated in JAA at CCRI and said that they owed much of their success to the guidance of the program and its advisers.

“I felt so prepared,” said Iriarte, who immigrated to the United States with only $8 in his pocket, seeking asylum from politically hostile Medellín, Colombia. “When I first started at CCRI, I knew I wanted to be a teacher, but I was kind of lost as to how to get there. What helped me were the mentoring from both my CCRI and RIC advisers through JAA. All of my curriculum was planned out, and all I had to do was concentrate on doing my best in my studies.”

Rossi, a mother of two who has continued to work full time while earning her degrees, said guidance and flexibility were what got her through. She said that when she first came back to school, she wasn’t sure how she wanted to apply herself.

Once she discovered her love of psychology, she was able to zero in on a clear path with the help of JAA. “It was so helpful for me, especially being an older student; I didn’t know what credits transferred and what didn’t, and this made the transition so much easier. It was fantastic,” she said.

Rossi is hoping to have continued success as she reaches her next crossroads: She has applied to earn her master’s in social work from RIC and eventually wants to open a therapy practice.

Iriarte’s dreams have already taken shape: Upon graduating from RIC, he was offered three teaching jobs and now teaches high school Spanish in Fairhaven, Mass. He said he is grateful to both of the state schools and the JAA program. “My students are my reward,” he said of his life now. “They seem to really like me and I connect with them, and I love that.”

To update the JAA office on your journey, email jaa@ccri.edu.
Passion for teaching began in Italian class

Madeline Capasso Sodhi ’97 has come a long way since her days growing up on Providence’s Federal Hill. She now lives in what nearly amounts to another world, in Bombay, India, where she teaches Spanish at an American school.

But her globe-spanning journey started, perhaps, long before, when her mother immigrated to the Ocean State from a small village in Italy.

Sodhi, who tries to make the trip back to the States every year with her husband, Manish, and her 3-year-old son, Ethan, said that she owes much of her passion for languages and her Italian heritage to her mother, who came here from the coastal city of Mondragone.

“She was so strong in her own ways, and I really looked up to her. When we grew up, she was speaking to us in Italian, ending sentences in English. It really kind of stuck with me, and in high school I said, ‘Of course I’ll take Italian,’” she said.

At the same time, Sodhi’s parents impressed upon her the importance of education. Other than her love of language, she couldn’t seem to find her niche at Classical High School and knew that she could do better. What’s more, she said, her mother made it clear that education was important. Her mother and her father, who suffered from multiple sclerosis, had not gone to college, but she heeded their advice and enrolled in science classes at the Community College of Rhode Island. “I just didn’t have the passion for it,” she said. “But I came back to Italian.”

That’s where Sodhi’s story intersects with Professor Maria Mansella, who teaches Italian at CCRI. Sodhi praised Mansella’s enthusiasm and encouragement, noting that Mansella had opened her eyes to the possibility of teaching a summer program at North Providence Public Library. “I was honored that she picked me for that program,” said Sodhi, who said she sees Mansella as her mentor. “That’s where my career really started.”

Although Sodhi was surprised to be selected, Mansella recognized something special in her student from the start. “I saw in Madeline important traits for a successful foreign language educator: a passion for languages, patience, understanding, respect for everyone in the classroom, attentive to the needs of other students,” Mansella said, recalling how Sodhi had assisted her in helping a visually impaired student, spending time teaching him while Sodhi herself was a student. Sodhi and Mansella clearly had an effect on him, too: That same student is now a teacher in Coventry.

“Teaching comes naturally to me,” said Sodhi. “Even after all these years, it’s exciting to see my students learn.”

Sodhi has been carrying the torch lit by Mansella for over a decade now, first in Rhode Island after earning her bachelor’s from Rhode Island College and then in nearby Massachusetts, where she was a teacher at King Philip Regional High School in Norfolk for five years. Sodhi earned her master’s degree from Lesley University while teaching both Italian and Spanish to learners of all ages. After her mother died in 2004, her husband proposed a trip to his native country, and Sodhi was game for the distraction.

It would turn out to be much more. She fell in love with India, taking a leave of absence from King Philip to work at the American School of Bombay, where she taught Spanish to a diverse student population hailing from more than 40 countries. After two years, Sodhi and her husband were ready to make the relocation permanent.

Now, ensconced in the school not only as a language teacher but as an adviser for the Habitat for Humanity Club and a grade-level team leader, Sodhi said she enjoys taking advantage of the professional development opportunities that the school provides. In addition to enriching her students’ already impressive linguistic armature, she works with other teachers to research and test 21st century classroom techniques such as mobile learning implements and visual thinking routines. “It’s very exciting,” she said.

Although Sodhi’s path has taken her to destinations most of us only see in the glossy pages of travel magazines, she said that all of her inspiration – and continued encouragement – has come from somewhere much closer to home. She said her son and husband are her inspiration, and that her hometown college, CCRI, gave her the space and direction that would launch her career.

“Going to CCRI was a fantastic move for me personally. I had the support, but I needed the guidance; I was the first one to go to college in my immediate family. It’s a wonderful place to figure out what you want to do and find your passion,” she said.
She wears it when she’s clamoring around in a castle, or more predictably, behind the desk from whence she runs the Just for Kids Early Childhood Learning Center in Smithfield. There, she does “a little bit of everything” as the owner and executive director of the site: curriculum design, working with families, payroll, licensing and connecting children with outside services that might help them with their specific needs. The environment fits her high-energy, cheerful persona; in the background, the sound of infants and toddlers at play constantly fills the air. “It’s probably easier to tell you what isn’t rewarding about this job,” she joked, unable to come up with any items for that list.

Moretti has come into her own at Just for Kids as much as her daycare denizens have. The center was one of her first field placements when she was earning her associate degree in Early Childhood Education from the Community College of Rhode Island. Her career now having come full circle, she credits the college with helping her find her true calling. This is, in part, why it’s so fitting that the other hat she wears is that of an educator on the other end of the spectrum: teaching adult learners how to shape these same young minds.

She was recently appointed the department chairwoman of early childhood education at Penn Foster, an online school where she completed her first diploma program in early childhood education before moving on to CCRI.

“I love knowing that my work will have an impact on so many lives. I get excited when students get excited, and I’m able to share my experience and knowledge.”

Moretti said that, although the two educational constituencies she works with are clearly different, they dovetail nicely. She routinely applies lessons learned at Just for Kids in her online courses and vice versa. This is not surprising, considering that she said what she enjoys most about working with the children at her child care center is watching that light bulb come on when they make a connection or learn something new.

A lifelong learner, Moretti herself hasn’t stopped making those connections. After earning her bachelor’s degree from Concordia University-St. Paul and her master’s from Nova Southeastern University, she is now seeking her doctorate in early childhood education at Northcentral University.

Alumna is shaping minds of children and adult learners

The two hats that Nancy Moretti ’91 wears couldn’t be more different at first glance. The first is woven, figuratively speaking, from the colorful fabric of imagination — from toddlers’ toys and Crayola-bright murals.

“I love knowing that my work will have an impact on so many lives. I get excited when students get excited, and I’m able to share my experience and knowledge.”

Although she said that the writing of her dissertation, predictably, hasn’t been all fun and games, Moretti no doubt has a lot of material to choose from. She has nearly 25 years of experience in the field to draw from at this point — something that would have seemed inconceivable to her when she was just out of high school and struggling to find her niche. Thankfully, she said, the flexible and supportive environment at CCRI, particularly her relationships with the faculty in the Early Childhood Education associate degree program, gave her the momentum she needed. That she was able to complete the degree while working full time was an added bonus, she said.

“I would absolutely recommend the program to anyone,” she said, noting that she often sends her own employees to the college to continue their education.

One employee in particular seems to have taken Moretti’s path as an example: Her 22-year-old daughter, Samantha, works full time at the center. Samantha has been involved in the family business since she and some high school friends painted a sea life mural on the walls of the center as a senior project. “It’s very rewarding to share this experience with her,” said Moretti.
USAN SOARES ’90 jokes that she’s a typical Rhode Islander.
Apart from a short stint in Connecticut early in her life, the
West Warwick native has never called another state – let alone
another town – home. She’s even represented the state in the Miss
USA pageant. But it’s not just inertia and her family that have kept
her anchored to the state she loves. Her career launched a new chapter
down by the docks in Newport one fateful summer day, a chapter she’s
still writing – and one that’s anything that’s typical.

Soares is the vice president of retail operations at Alex and Ani, the
homegrown jewelry company that has made its mark on the fashion
world with its distinctive, 100 percent American-made and sourced
bangles and charms. It was in true Rhode Island fashion that she found
herself at the post, running into an old high school acquaintance, Giovanni
Feroce, the company’s CEO, in front of the flagship store in Newport.
“I believe it was fate that brought us together that day,” she said of
seeing Feroce on the wharf during a Memorial Day jaunt in 2010 with
her husband, Brian. “He told me that he and Carolyn Rafaelian were
about to open seven more stores, and that we should talk. I’ve been
here ever since.”

Now, sitting in Alex and Ani’s sleekly picturesque vintage modern
office, Soares oversees the empire’s national expansion. But it’s not
just fate that Soares said she has to thank for her exciting and reward-
ing career; she got a boost from another Rhode Island institution: the
Community College of Rhode Island.

After graduating from high school and spending a few years work-
ing as a secretary in a law office, Soares found that she wasn’t being
challenged in the way that she hoped for. “The busier I am, the more
productive and happier I am,” said Soares, who juggled cheerleading,
tap dancing and a part-time job in high school.

Sitting at the same desk and doing the same thing day in and day
out wasn’t sitting well with her, and so when she found a job with a
tuition reimbursement program, she began to take business manage-
ment classes at the college.

After she was laid off from that job, a part-time position in retail at
Ganto’s, the now-defunct women’s apparel store, opened the door to
her true passion. She switched her major to retail management, where
she studied with professors such as Susan Caressimo, with whom
she maintains contact to this day. While she was attending class full
time, the college allowed her to count her concurrent work experience toward her degree, making earning her associate in retail management and fashion merchandising a viable proposition.

“I’ve always been interested in fashion,” she explained, adding that her older sister also worked in retail, exposing Soares to the latest fashions from a young age. “And I love retail. I love the challenge of having a sales goal to meet, and having people leave the store happy. How many people get to see that happen in their careers?”

After graduating from CCRI, she continued to work at Ganto’s. Her next stop was Ann Taylor, where she worked for 12 years, first as an assistant manager at the Warwick Mall location and then as a training store manager for the company, helping new management hires acclimate to the culture and align with the company goals. She was responsible for opening the store at Providence Place, after which she took a post as regional training and development manager, overseeing 31 stores and creating management programs for the personnel.

She and her husband had two children in the interim, and she took a break from retail for a while to work for Barnes & Noble in Warwick as the community relations manager, a position that gave her a more manageable schedule but didn’t quite give her the challenge she knew she’d be looking for long term. Then she ran into Feroce, and the rest is an undeniably successful piece of local – and now national – retail history.

“In three years, we’ve opened 37 new stores and gone from 11 employees at the original Newport location to now over 600 retail people in the field with 24 additional stores slated to open in 2014,” she said, motioning to a wall on her office adorned with photographs of each Alex and Ani storefront as well as the area and district managers she oversees.

Her pride in the company – and the home state she shares with it – is palpable. “It’s nice to see the state’s economy bouncing back, and to be a part of a company that is involved in the revitalization of that economy,” she said. “Another important part of our mission is that we don’t go into mall situations – we’re on Main Street. Through our success, we can boost visibility of the street that we’re on and bring extra foot traffic to local neighborhood businesses.”

Although Alex and Ani’s first priority will always be its home state, Soares calls the national expansion effort “exciting.” Now winding its way down the East Coast as well as into strategic clusters out West, the brand’s momentum keeps growing. “I have that whole thing to dot,” Soares said, motioning to another wall of her office adorned with a broad United States map.

Other than helping the company expand its reach, Soares keeps herself busy by spending time with her family (daughter Brooke, 17, recently completed her college applications and is waiting to see where she’ll head next, and son, Jake, 12, is involved in sports) and volunteering with the American Cancer Society. It’s a cause close to her heart; her mother battled three different cancers, eventually succumbing to leukemia. Alex and Ani carries bangles that help fund cancer research, and Soares is part of the committee to organize the first Rhode Island fundraiser to benefit the ACS, set to take place this fall.

Though she has much to look forward to still, Soares looks back fondly on her time at CCRI, crediting the college with helping her discover her passion and make career advancement possible.

“I felt like everything I learned there, I could really use. And that made me more invested in the career that I chose. I feel like I’m one of the lucky ones,” she said.

Alex and Ani has formed a partnership with the Community College of Rhode Island as it prepares to celebrate its 50th anniversary. Through the company’s Affinity division, CCRI’s Alumni Association will release a bangle featuring the college’s seal this spring.

Alumni Association board member and past president Sondra Pitts ’66 had the idea to partner with the local lifestyle brand. “I knew that Alex and Ani was a growing business, and I knew their philosophy about keeping their company local and providing jobs for Rhode Islanders. I thought that CCRI would make a perfect partner, with its philosophy of providing an education for Rhode Islanders of all ages and backgrounds,” said Pitts, who approached the company last April.

“I wanted to have something that not only could commemorate the 50th anniversary of the college but could also be a long-term fundraising item for the Alumni Association,” she added.

The partnership was a first; Alex and Ani Affinity Sales Manager Colleen Fugere said the company had yet to work with a community college. “CCRI is a Rhode Island institution, and what better way to test the community college market than with someone in our backyard?” said Fugere.

Pitts said that the missions of the two institutions were so in sync that it was like “little light bulbs” going off as she continued to work on the partnership. “As President Ray Di Pasquale has always said, CCRI is about changing lives and achieving dreams. That’s what Alex and Ani is about, too.”

Fugere agreed: “We’re not just selling jewelry; we’re selling our message of positive energy. Every piece that we create is created with a positive intent. We’re about small business and creating jobs in Rhode Island,” she said.

The Alumni Association purchased 500 bangles in gold and silver that will be available for purchase beginning in April at CCRI bookstores and online at www.ccri.edu/bookstore.
Building life-changing technology from the ground up
COMMUNITY COLLEGE of Rhode Island alumnus Chris Baker ’07 has been in some challenging situations in his life. The Warwick native is in his second year of his doctoral studies at Brown University, where he’s doing incredibly intricate work designing drug delivery systems – in layman’s terms, he develops systems and devices that allow pharmaceuticals to be used by the human body more efficiently. Above and beyond the difficulty of the work he does, and the world-renowned environment in which he does it, Baker has remained fairly unflappable, even when his program, along with his life goals, was put on a brief hiatus when Brown eliminated application status of the specialty.

The secret to Baker’s determined demeanor likely comes from another challenging situation he mastered earlier in his lifetime when, far from the safe and sterile confines of the laboratory, he was living in a much darker, more dangerous place: in the belly of a U.S. Navy ship docked in Hampton Roads, Va. Baker, then a 2nd class petty officer in the Navy and a third-generation naval enlisted man, was charged with operating a nuclear reactor.

The hours were grueling, the climate was unpleasant and, though it was docked stateside, the ship had its moments of peril. Baker calmly described an incident where an electrical fire in a 4,160-volt motor generator coincided with a salt water flooding casualty in the engine room space while all lighting and ventilation failed in the background – a tale that he concluded by chuckling and saying, “So I knew I was prepared for an Ivy League school.”

Although Baker’s first undergraduate application to Brown was denied because of his lack of an official transcript or college credits, he persisted, enrolling at CCRI full time under the GI Bill. Under the tutelage of Dr. Ralph Kreiser, Baker took courses in organic chemistry, biology, and math with his eyes on trying again for the pre-med program at Brown.

Kreiser helped him complete the application for the university’s Resumed Undergraduate Education Program and his persistence was rewarded: Baker was accepted to Brown, where he earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees. “It’s about determination,” he said, reflecting on the experience. “There will be obstacles in life, but you have to keep going forward and continuously set goals.”

Once Baker arrived at Brown, he felt his own goals shifting. Once interested in practicing medicine as a physician, he began looking into the possibilities that a doctorate would bring. He said he began to understand that working as a medical doctor would not allow him the level of involvement that he preferred, noting that medical doctors have to implement other people’s scientific advancements under enormous outside pressures, particularly as the health care system itself is undergoing significant change. Earning his doctorate in biotechnology would allow him to do what he found himself most passionate about: building technology from the ground up that may very well have the power to significantly change lives.

But Baker would have to wait a little longer to get started on that dream. After he attained his master’s degree, he was notified that the Ph.D. program he wished to pursue had been removed from application status pending overhaul.

“That was tough,” he said, but not one to be easily swayed, Baker found work in the drug delivery field at Perosphere Inc., a company that since has left the state. There, he gained two years of experience working in what he called an excellent and supportive environment, biding his time and awaiting the reinstatement of application status for the Brown University biotechnology program.

Now happily ensconced back in the lab, Baker continues to look to his ever-brightening future while at the same time remembering his past and assisting those who, like him, have their sights set on higher horizons. Instrumental in setting up Brown’s now-active Student Veterans Organization (SVO), Baker knows firsthand the value of offering supportive pathways for veterans, many of whom come back from their service and begin school at an older age than most freshmen. While there was no SVO at CCRI when Baker attended, he soon invited the just-formed organization onto Brown’s campus, where the Brown SVO gave the CCRI veterans a point of contact and the ability to make introductions. He has continued to individually mentor CCRI students such as Michael Steiner, a member of the Class of 2014 who plans to apply to Brown.

“It’s definitely rewarding,” he said of his new role as a mentor and physiology adjunct instructor in the same classrooms where he got his start. “I feel like I’ve come full circle.”

Above all, Baker said that he wants all CCRI students – past, current and future – to hold their head up high when they announce where they’re beginning to build their education and the rest of their lives. “It’s a wonderful place to start,” he said of the college, noting that the support that he found from Kreiser and the rest of the faculty was instrumental in shaping him not only as a student, but as a person.
Even though Helen Valcourt ‘81 retired from a long career in business last spring, she hasn’t stopped working to better herself and others. The Coventry resident works part time for her niece, volunteers at her church and plans to continue her education by taking courses in Spanish – a far cry from spending her golden years relaxing in warmer climes. But Valcourt said that her most rewarding experiences have come from giving back to the institution that “opened up so many doors” for her when she was first starting out.

Valcourt said she has been serving on the CCRI Alumni Association board for the past four years. She started that post after receiving a call to volunteer in the mail.

“I had heard about all the great work that the Alumni Association does, and CCRI is a really great college and I just knew I wanted to help out,” she said.

In addition to her duties on the board and donations she has made to help offer student scholarship opportunities, Valcourt gives substantially of her time. She volunteers in the Office of Institutional Advancement at the Flanagan Campus, where she works with donor management software, serves on the committee for the Annual Golf Tournament and staffs tables at various events.

“I love the people I work with,” she says of her colleagues at the office and the Alumni Association. “It’s also the type of work I did earlier in my career, which I still enjoy.”

At the time Valcourt graduated high school, she explained, continuing on to college was not a common choice. In fact, she was the first in her family to do so after a few years in the workforce, knowing that to do the kind of work she dreamed of doing, she would need a degree.

She said she lacked the necessary discipline and direction to succeed at Bryant University, and instead came to CCRI after taking a year off to re-evaluate. There, she said, the attention of the faculty and the personal, encouraging atmosphere of the classes helped her focus and take charge of her education. After graduating from CCRI, she went on to attend Lesley University, where she earned her bachelor’s degree in business management.

“She said she lacked the necessary discipline and direction to succeed at Bryant University, and instead came to CCRI after taking a year off to re-evaluate. There, she said, the attention of the faculty and the personal, encouraging atmosphere of the classes helped her focus and take charge of her education. After graduating from CCRI, she went on to attend Lesley University, where she earned her bachelor’s degree in business management.”

“After that, I knew I could get the kind of job I really wanted,” she said, looking back fondly on her fulfilling positions at Hasbro and Fatima Hospital.

It’s these rewards that CCRI helped Valcourt reap that influenced her to give back to the college and its students. “I loved the idea of helping students, and I wanted to be a part of that. Getting to meet all of these people who receive the awards and scholarships is just wonderful. It’s great to see people of all ages going back to college and knowing that we can be a stepping stone to their future,” said Valcourt, who was 32 when she returned to school.

It’s clear from Valcourt’s active retirement that she’s one of those life-long learners – the kind of person who is interested in meeting new people and trying new things. She attributes much of this curiosity to her experience at CCRI, which she said broadened her mind.

“Right from the beginning, I felt like I was a better person because of my education. It opened up a lot of horizons and got me places I never thought I’d go,” she said. She encourages students of all ages and abilities to come to CCRI to find their new path, even if it’s a journey that starts with just one class.

And her message to her fellow alumni is a similar one: Get started by giving back, because you never know what doors you’ll be able to open up – for yourself, for others and for Rhode Island’s future learners and leaders.

To learn how to establish a scholarship for students or donate to the Alumni Fund, call the Office of Institutional Advancement at 401-333-7150.
'70s

1971 – Linda Petrucci, better known as Lin Tucci, plays Anita DeMarco in the Netflix prison drama “Orange is the New Black.” She appeared in six of the first season’s 13 episodes and is working on the show’s second season.

1972, 1991 – Jane Jordan has been promoted to interim personnel director for the city of Warwick, where she has worked for 31 years.

1973 – Karen A. Salvatore is a social entrepreneur whose goal is to replicate Fit2cook4Kids camps nationally as a model solution for childhood obesity and related diseases.

1974 – Kenneth M. MacDonald has been named head coach of the Austin Toros, a basketball team of the NBA Development League. MacDonald attended Providence College, where he became interested in coaching, on scholarship. He was promoted from assistant coach.

1977 – Bob Chaplin received an honorary alumni award at Laconia (N.H.) High School. This award is given to those who support and represent the school and community with the utmost respect. He worked for 31 years in the Laconia school system, the last 13 as superintendent of schools.

'90s

1990 – Steven P. Taffe, a master tattooist who owns 12 Tattoos in Groton, Conn., is one of 16 tattoo artists who will compete in this season’s “Ink Master” SpikeTV reality show.

1993 – Steve Rioux has been named assistant superintendent of schools in Killingly, Conn. He will focus on state-mandated reform efforts, including implementation of the Common Core State Standards, and a new teacher evaluation process.

1996 – Raymond Peters recently retired from the Johnston Police Department, where he served in the patrol division as a detective, BCI/Crime Scene Unit commander, Sniper Team leader, lead instructor for the firearms training unit, the department armorer, tactical instructor and SWAT team commander. He will join the Foster Police Department as a patrol officer.

'00s

2003 – Julia Trainor is working as an advanced registered nurse practitioner in a cardiovascular and thoracic surgery office in Florida. She recently earned her Master’s of Science degree in nursing at Florida Southern College.

2004 – Mark Cadoret and Alyssa Falvey were married on May 25, 2013, in St. Martha’s Church in East Providence. Mark is a police officer for the city of East Providence. Alyssa, who attends CCRI, also worked for the city of East Providence.

2006 – Deanna D’Agostino was hired as a radiologic technologist at Miriam Hospital, where she underwent clinical training as a CCRI student.

2006 – Jaime Elliott and William Ellis were married on Sept. 22, 2012, at the Japanese Garden in Roger Williams Park in Providence. Jaime is the owner of Peas in a Pod Child Care in Cranston.

2009 – Dana T. Blouin has been accepted into a Ph.D. program at Thammasat University in Thailand.

2010 – Heather Lopes was inducted into the Pi Omicron Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society at CCRI. She is the assistant town clerk in Jamestown.

2010 – Jessica Schlessler presented a solo recital on July 1, 2013, as part of Cranberry Coast Concerts. She was named the organization’s Outstanding Young Artist in 2011 and 2012.

2010 – Staci R. Smith graduated from the University of Rhode Island and is attending Western University Health Sciences College of Dental Medicine in Pomona, Calif.

2011 – Ondrea Robinson was featured in an article in Rhode Island Monthly in September about adults with autism making the transition to independence. She volunteers weekly at The Autism Project.

2013 (Honorary) – Mark Gim, CCRI Trustee, has been promoted to executive vice president, wealth management and treasurer at The Washington Trust Co. In his new role, he is responsible for establishing and executing strategy for Washington Trust Wealth Management.

2013 – Christopher Munoz, a native of Chile who graduated with a 4.0 GPA, is attending Brown University on a full scholarship to study electrical engineering.

2013 – Tara Silva and Lance Cpl. Kevin Borino were married on July 15, 2013, in Jacksonville, N.C. She is a merchandising manager with TJX Cos.

Calendar of events

This calendar lists some of the upcoming events and important dates involving Community College Rhode Island students, alumni, faculty and staff. For more information about what is happening at CCRI campuses, go to www.ccri.edu. For athletic schedules, visit www.ccri.edu/athl.

CCRI Faculty Show

Work in a variety of media will be on display.
Feb. 27 to March 20
Flanagan Campus Art Gallery, Lincoln

Author visit

Michael Patrick MacDonald, author of “Easter Rising,” will speak about parallels between South Boston and Belfast, Ireland.

Noon, March 20, Flanagan Campus Room 1336, Lincoln

“Holding Space”

An exhibition featuring 13 artists.
April 1 to 24
Knight Campus Art Gallery, Warwick

The Annual Student-directed Project

An evening of 10-minute plays directed by three students.
Thursday to Sunday, April 24 to 27
Liston Campus, Providence

Alumni Association 12th Annual Golf Tournament

June 11 (See back cover for details.)

In memoriam — The Green & White Alumni Magazine publishes “In memoriam” in honor of college alumni.

David H. Heffron ’75
Leah M. O’Toole ’11
Lucy D. Medeiros ’66
Leonardo L. Sime ’10
Joan N. Monaghan ’84
Nicolas A. Valois ’08
Michelle L. Narcisi ’01

Brian Deighan, CCRI’s head golf coach, died on Jan. 6. He was 55. A former athlete who played for Tolman High School and CCRI, his background as a college tennis player included All-Region honors and distinction as player of the year in New England. His coaching experience spanned the high school and community college levels in golf, football and tennis. From 1999 to 2002, Deighan served as assistant coach of CCRI’s coed tennis program and was promoted to head coach for the 2003 and 2004 seasons. For the past three years, he served as a volunteer golf coach for Narragansett High School overseeing practices, team competition and students’ academic progress.

Donations in his memory may be made to Home and Hospice Care of Rhode Island, 1085 North Main St., Providence, RI 02904.
1964: 50 years ago

The first faculty, staff and administrators of Rhode Island Junior College.
Join us as an Alumni Ambassador

Alumni Ambassadors are a networking group of CCRI graduates who agree to assist with programs and projects to help the Alumni Association and CCRI students. As an ambassador, you might:

• Identify CCRI alumni who live in your community.
• Collect names, addresses, telephone numbers, emails, etc. when you meet alumni and share this information so we may update our records.
• Provide career and leadership information to students through an organized mentoring or networking program.

Interested? Please contact Marisa Albini, director of Alumni Affairs, at alumni@ccri.edu.

MEMBER UPDATE

If you’re not receiving a discount on your auto insurance, PLEASE CALL METLIFE AUTO & HOME®: 1-877-491-5087

Community College of Rhode Island’s Alumni Association members will get a discount on auto insurance!

MetLife Auto & Home has screened top insurers to find companies that will offer competitive rates to our members. All you need to do is call one number to get multiple quotes from top-rated insurers that have agreed to give you an immediate member discount.

As a member of the Community College of Rhode Island’s Alumni Association, you could save hundreds** every year with discounts like these:

✓ Up to 15% member discount
✓ Up to 20% discount based on length of membership
✓ Up to $250* credit for claim-free driving
✓ Extra savings with a multi-policy discount

By calling MetLife Auto & Home, you’re making the most of your membership and you could save hundreds!

Get FREE quotes from top-rated companies.
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**Savings are based on an annualized average savings for a group auto policy where the customer provided his/her prior premium and prior carrier at the time of the original quote (between 01/10-12/10) and where the written auto premium amount resulted in a price less than the disclosed prior carrier’s premium. Discounts may not be available from all carriers and are only available to those who qualify. Coverages, discounts and billing options are subject to state availability, individual qualification and/or the insuring company’s underwriting guidelines. CCRI is not a sponsor of this program and is in no way responsible for the insurance provided through this program.
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Save the Date

Community College of Rhode Island Alumni Association’s

12th Annual GOLF TOURNAMENT

Wednesday, June 11 • Crystal Lake Golf Club, Mapleville, R.I.

For more information, to pre-register or to sponsor, call 401-333-7150 or visit www.ccri.edu/alumni/golf.