Commencement 2012: CCRI celebrates the success of its graduates

Union leader Michael Sabitoni ’87
President Ray Di Pasquale presents Chelsea Jeanne Vincente, the last graduate to cross the stage, with her diploma during CCRI’s 47th commencement exercises on May 18.
A message from the President

Novelist Reynolds Price said the need to hear and tell stories is essential to humans, taking a back seat only to nourishment, shelter and love. As the Community College of Rhode Island celebrated its 47th commencement in May, I had the privilege to tell many stories about CCRI graduates and what they have accomplished on their path to achieving their dreams. Each year I look forward to sharing the personal tales of triumph and perseverance of members of the graduating class, some of which are featured in this issue on Page 7.

The fabric of the CCRI community is woven with success stories like these. Students leave CCRI better prepared for the next step in their lives, whatever that step may be, after overcoming various challenges. The college is proud of its mission to provide these students with an opportunity for personal and professional achievement.

This year CCRI conferred 1,659 associate degrees and certificates to the Class of 2012. They journey on to the next phase of their lives, whether it is to continue their education, enter the workforce or pursue another passion, they join a special community of alumni. On behalf of CCRI students, faculty and staff, I proudly welcome them to the Alumni Association.

Ray M. Di Pasquale
President

A message from the President of the Alumni Association

It has been my pleasure to serve the Alumni Association for the past three years. Because this is the last issue of the Green & White magazine before I complete my term as president, I want to reflect on the great strides our organization has made on behalf of the Community College of Rhode Island and its alumni.

The Alumni Association more than doubled the net revenue from its annual golf tournament and increased the net revenue from the Society of the Knights event. Because of this, the organization has been able to provide additional support to students through the book awards as well as for alumni programs.

With collaboration from Web Services and the Department of Marketing and Communications, we introduced Knightline, an e-newsletter for alumni and friends that is distributed three times per year. We also upgraded the Alumni Association newsletter into what you’re reading now – a 12-page, full-color magazine.

As a result of improving its communications, the Office of Alumni Affairs has improved the integrity of its database of contacts. This will allow us to keep you better informed of the Association’s progress and how you can be involved with your alma mater.

While my term as president is coming to a close, I am excited about the future of the Alumni Association and the direction it is headed. I welcome the Class of 2012 that recently joined the alumni ranks and look forward to the work that lies ahead.

Joshua M. Klemp ‘04
President
CCRI Alumni Association
Alumni Association sponsors annual golf tournament
The Community College of Rhode Island Alumni Association held its 10th annual golf tournament at the North Kingstown Golf Course on June 13. The tournament raised $18,000 to benefit students through scholarships and emergency funds.

Cullen, Silvestre and Wilkes inducted into CCRI Hall of Fame
Three new members were inducted into the Community College of Rhode Island Hall of Fame on April 22, each of them colleagues and pioneers from the college’s early days.

Vincent A. Cullen was the school’s first athletic director and went on to compile a 711-270 record as CCRI’s first basketball coach; Charles “Charlie” Wilkes spent 30 years as an assistant basketball coach and helped pioneer the Student-Athlete Academic Support Program as well as the Student Success Center; and Dr. Robert Silvestre was one of the college’s original faculty members who went on to be vice president for Academic Affairs and a driving force behind the creation of the CCRI Center for Workforce and Community Education, and degree programs such as Dental Hygiene, Radiology and Nursing.

Nearly 300 people attended the event at Kirkbrae Country Club in Lincoln, R.I., making it the most well-attended Hall of Fame induction in CCRI history. The Hall of Fame was established by the CCRI Foundation and held its first biennial induction ceremony in 1994.

Visit www.ccri.edu/hof for more coverage of this event.
All College Week celebrates the ‘CCRI experience’
The talents of CCRI students, faculty and staff were once again on display during All College Week 2012. The college community celebrated the CCRI experience with a presentation by storyteller Valerie Tutson; a day of community service; the annual Wellness Fair; a tribute to diversity; and Professional Development Day for faculty and staff. The series of events concluded with a performance honoring Abraham Lincoln and a special ceremony to retire the jersey of former major league pitcher Rheal Cormier ’88.

Faculty, staff celebrated for years of service
The Community College of Rhode Island recognized 88 employees for their years of service to the college on April 27. Recognition for longevity was made in five-year increments starting with 10 years of service and ending with 45 years of service.

Of those honored, 34 had more than 25 years of service, including five who have worked for the college, which opened in 1964, for 45 years. Together, all of the honored employees have contributed 2,055 years of service to CCRI.

Hundreds get free dental care
CCRI hosted the first-ever Rhode Island Mission of Mercy event at its state-of-the-art dental health labs at the Flanagan Campus in Lincoln to provide free dental treatment to 801 uninsured or underinsured patients on June 2 and 3.

More than 450 dental professionals from Rhode Island including general dentists, pediatric dentists, endodontists, periodontists, oral surgeons, orthodontists and dental hygienists, assistants and technicians volunteered their services. Also present were about 350 community volunteers who escorted patients, directed traffic, worked in the cafeteria and provided translation. Many CCRI students, staff and alumni were on hand, including many from the Dental Hygiene graduating Class of 2012.
Workforce leader Michael Sabitoni ’87 is committed to union labor in Rhode Island

by ROBERT PRELIASTCO
As president of the Rhode Island Building and Construction Trades Council, Michael F. Sabitoni ’87 represents 10,000 tradesmen in 15 unions that include laborers, electricians, plumbers, pipefitters, iron workers, painters and masons.

“We’ve built every highway, road and bridge, every major building of any capacity in 39 cities and towns,” Sabitoni said. “Our tradesmen pretty much build and maintain this state, so it’s a significant responsibility that I have.]”


His responsibilities include overseeing the administrative functions of Laborers Local Union 271 as its business manager, “pursuing legislative policies that put tradesmen and women to work building and rebuilding the state of Rhode Island,” negotiating contracts and grievances, and meeting with construction company owners and real estate developers.

“These are 24/7 jobs,” he said, adding that his workweek is about 70 hours long. “Even when you’re not at work, certain responsibilities are always on your mind. You’re never really off the clock because so many working families depend on the decisions you make.”

Sabitoni also finds time to serve on the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corp. Board, the governor’s Career Pathways Workforce Board, the Rhode Island AFL-CIO executive committee and as a council member of the state’s Building Futures outreach program, which helps find apprenticeships for inner-city minorities.

“That’s something that we’re extremely proud of,” Sabitoni said, “the diversification of the building trades through that program. Without it, many participants probably wouldn’t have gotten an opportunity to come into the trades and have a career in construction.”

Sabitoni’s commitment to union labor runs deep, with many of his family members before him having worked in the construction trade. He followed in the footsteps of his late uncle, Armando V. Sabitoni, and his cousin Armand E. Sabitoni, general secretary-treasurer of the Laborers’ International Union of North America.

“I think it’s kind of like anything else,” Sabitoni said.

“Sometimes you see a family where there’s a big group that enters the military or the police department … my family has been in the laborers’ union for three generations and they instilled in me the responsibility of what it means to be a union member and a trade unionist.”

What it means, Sabitoni said, is a sense of camaraderie. His favorite example:

“When 9/11 happened, most of those first responders other than rescuers were our brothers and sisters of the New York building trades,” Sabitoni said. “Soon after, our brothers and sisters from building trade councils from all over the country just bused in and volunteered to do whatever they could.”

He added, “And again after Hurricane Katrina, local unions in Louisiana and Mississippi requested volunteers and many from this local went down … I think that’s something that’s unique to the labor movement that’s still alive: the brotherhood and sisterhood among members. We can all get there together.”

Sabitoni has spent most of his life in the construction trade and the union, beginning as a teenager working construction jobs during the summer to pay for his education at Community College of Rhode Island.

A lifelong Johnston resident, Sabitoni graduated from Johnston High School in 1985 and came to CCRI that fall.

“I was a little indecisive on what I wanted to do but I knew that higher education was important, so it was a natural step to go to CCRI,” he said.

An avid basketball player, Sabitoni played for the Knights in both of his years at CCRI. He played for Head Coach Vin Cullen and Assistant Coach Charlie Wilkes, both veritable institutions at CCRI, on a team that was formidable if not quite championship-level.

“We were OK but we didn’t have any height,” Sabitoni said. “We won some tough games. We were competitive but when you have the likes of Coach Wilkes and Coach Cullen you are always competitive.”

Cullen remembers Sabitoni as “… full of energy, a strong kid. We want our kids to know exactly what their role is on the court and he was a very good role player for us.”

Cullen added, “He was a hard-working, tough, determined player and we were very fortunate to have him.”

Practices took place immediately after school and Sabitoni and the other players often would stay after for an additional two or three hours playing pickup games.

“It was a fun part of my life,” he said, “I look back on it quite often.”

 Academically, Sabitoni focused on accounting but switched to marketing in his second year.

“That really highlights the need for quality public education,” Sabitoni said. “There are a lot of kids like me who need that extra year or two to home in on what they want to do. Now more than ever I think it’s important.”

Sabitoni stayed for an extra semester at CCRI and then transferred to Bryant University in the spring of 1988. He took night classes there for four years while working fulltime in construction during the day.

He first joined Rhode Island’s Construction and General Laborers’ Local Union 271 in 1988 and steadily rose both in the construction trade and within the union. He became a steward, a foreman and then a general foreman before becoming a regional organizer for New England Laborers’.

After a year in this position, he became a construction market representative, soliciting construction contractors to bid on projects within New England.

In 2003, he was appointed as a field representative for Laborers Local Union 271 and, in 2005, was elected business manager.

“That brought me full circle,” he said. “I worked my way up to working for the international and then came back to the local union … Starting as a laborer and going to that position means I ran the whole gamut.”

Sabitoni said his career arc also has made him appreciate his education.

“As I’ve gotten more administration duties, that extra higher learning has helped me adapt from a construction site to an administrative post and all the responsibilities that come along with it,” he said.

“I see higher education having a key role as we train the workforce for the future and I commend President Di Pasquale, the Alumni Association, and all the faculty and staff for the job that they do preparing young people in the state of Rhode Island to meet the future workforce needs.”

Sabitoni resides in Johnston with his wife, Joyce, and three sons, Michael, Matthew and Cameron.
CCRI celebrates the success of its graduates

by Robert Preliasco

For the 1,659 graduates at the Community College of Rhode Island’s 47th commencement on May 18, the day was about celebrating one another. Students cheered as CCRI President Ray Di Pasquale shared the personal stories of six members of the Class of 2012.

The graduates included Anthony Paolino, who worked on his degree for 10 years between overseas deployments with the R.I. Air National Guard and is the head of a nonprofit organization serving returning veterans; Regina Castro, who immigrated to the United States only three years ago, mastered English, and graduated with a 4.0 GPA in her major of General Business; and Alejandro Tobon, who lost everything in the real estate market collapse and returned to school to become an exercise physiologist and help people lead healthier lifestyles.

Student speaker Lauren Macbeth said that the Class of 2012 is full of such stories, and that together they make up a diverse and supportive community. “Each of our stories is unique,” she said. “Today we all stand together as one community – a community of support and strength, a community composed of each other.”

Macbeth was home-schooled and nervous about entering the classroom for the first time in college. She said she found a strong community of fellow students at CCRI who helped her succeed.

U.S. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, Congressman David Cicilline and Gov. Lincoln Chafee attended the commencement ceremony and offered their congratulations to the graduates.

“Today we all stand together as one community – a community of support and strength, a community composed of each other.”

Di Pasquale reminded the graduates that they are now a part of a group of 58,000 alumni who work in many different fields throughout the country.

“The power of the community college is great,” he said, “as you have all seen in your time here.” He reminded the graduates to thank “your faculty, staff, parents, siblings and friends who have helped you get here today.”

For many of the graduates, the day was very much about family.

Chrystal Smith, a 42-year-old Nursing graduate, said she is following in the footsteps of her mother, who also graduated from CCRI at age 42.

“My mother was a single mother with four of us children and she raised us very well. She took good care of us and that’s been my inspiration,” Smith said.

Meanwhile, the Egan family had the privilege of seeing two generations graduate on the same day. John Egan Sr. graduated with a degree in Fire Science and his son John Egan Jr. earned a degree in General Studies, with hopes of earning a bachelor’s degree in computer science.

Student speaker Lauren Macbeth

Anthony Paolino

Lauren Macbeth

Anthony Paolino

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Meet the Class of 2012

Regina Castro graduated from CCRI with a degree in General Business and a 4.0 GPA. She is transferring to Bryant University, where she will major in finance and minor in economics.

Lauren Macbeth, CCRI’s 2012 student commencement speaker, had not intended to go to college, but she has graduated with a 3.97 GPA and a degree in General Business.

For Kathleen Melberg of Newport, attending CCRI was a second chance at education after battling a lifelong drug addiction.

Melissa Murphy of Warwick knew that if her mother could do it, she could, too. Murphy’s single mother attended CCRI and became a respiratory therapist while raising five children.

Ashley Olson played catcher for the CCRI Lady Knights softball team. As tri-captain and the college record-holder for most single-season hits and RBIs and most career hits, she is also one of the strongest softball players in CCRI history.

Rhode Island Air National Guard Sgt. Anthony Paolino has been pursuing his degree from CCRI on and off for 10 years, with frequent interruptions to serve overseas.

CCRI gave Maderline Perez of Providence an opportunity to pursue her dream. Perez moved with her mother and sister from the Dominican Republic when she was 4 years old, joining her uncle and grandmother in Providence.

A pivotal moment in Jodi Perron’s life came when she was in junior high school. Growing up at the height of the space shuttle program, Perron was interested in science and fascinated by NASA. At CCRI she has pursued her dream to work there.

When Marco Spencer came to the United States at age 16, he knew he wanted to go to college eventually, but felt stymied by the language barrier and the challenges of adapting to a new culture. After service in the U.S. Navy and a strong start at CCRI, he is ready to pursue his dream of working in medicine.

Alejandro Tobon returned to CCRI to change careers after losing his own home and comfortable job. He has been accepted into Barry University in Miami Shores, Fla., to study exercise physiology, and wants to encourage people to live a healthy lifestyle.

Read more about this year’s successful graduates online: www.ccri.edu/commencement
Baseball team represents CCRI in World Series

The CCRI men’s baseball team ended its 2012 season with a 33-13 record and an appearance in the NJCAA Division II World Series for the first time in 16 years, playing two games in Enid, Okla., on May 26 and 27.

And while they came home early, not all of the team’s accomplishments were on the field. The Knights held a baseball clinic for local Little Leaguers and teamed up with local country music star Kylie Morgan to spread an anti-bullying message.

“We wanted to give back to the local community for hosting us while we were out there,” said CCRI Baseball Head Coach Ken Hopkins ’75.

Morgan, who sang the national anthem and performed at one of the Knights’ games, has an anti-bullying campaign called “It Matters What We Do” and the Knights wore T-shirts with this message and spoke to local children about how hurtful bullying can be.

The Knights also spent a lot of their time in Oklahoma working with the Enid Red Sox, a Little League team coached by a transplanted New Englander and Boston Red Sox fan.

“Our kids made some great friendships with them,” Hopkins said. “[The Knights] look like professional players to these Little League kids so they were looking up to our players. They came to our games, sat behind our dugout and cheered us on and it really worked out nicely.”

The Knights helped the Red Sox with their batting and fielding and the Little Leaguers spent a lot of time with the CCRI players both on and off the field.

“That was one of my favorite moments because I love working with kids,” said Knights shortstop Marc Dorsi.

He said he has stayed in touch with several of the Little Leaguers he met, who say that their favorite time of the year is when the NJCAA World Series comes to their town.

And when the games went badly, the Red Sox acted like loyal fans.

“They really help you when you lose; they pick your spirits up, they definitely do,” Dorsi said. “There’s a lot of humor and they try to make you forget about the loss pretty quickly.”

Those losses were tough for the Knights, who started out strong in both cases – and were in the lead through the seventh inning in their first game against Madison College – but both times made a few mistakes that cost the game.

Catcher and co-captain Tom Gavitt said the Knights were simply out-pitched by some talented teams.

“The pitching that we faced was actually very good but we belonged there [in the series],” he said. “We weren’t overmatched by any means.”

Dorsi added: “We had both games won. We let them get away from us but there’s no question that we were just as good as any team there.”

“We worked hard to get to that point … the way we ended our season is still a success,” he said. “We’ve accomplished more this year than the school has accomplished in the last 15 years. I hope for more to come from this

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Sports wrap up

With national championship appearances by runner Bobby Allen, men’s basketball, baseball and tennis, as well as numerous regional and district titles, CCRI athletic teams have had, arguably, the college’s most successful year. Here are some highlights of winter and spring team achievements in 2012.

Winter

Men’s basketball took second place in the NJCAA Division II Men’s Basketball National Tournament on March 24. The Knights fell to No. 1 seed Mott Community College of Flint, Mich., in the championship game, 70-60. The Knights finished the season with a 19-12 overall record and advanced to the national tournament by sweeping the Region XXI and District championships.

Women’s basketball advanced to the NJCAA Division II Women’s Basketball National Tournament after defeating Monroe College for the Region XXI title. The Lady Knights finished the season with a 19-12 overall record and an 8-1 record in region play.

Runner Bobby Allen placed first in both the mile and 3,000-meter events at the NJCAA Indoor Track and Field Championship at Eastern Illinois University. He is the first CCRI student in history to win two national championship events at a single meet.

Spring

The golf team took second place in the NJCAA Region XXI Tournament, losing to defending regional champs Dean College. The team finished 14-5 and three players qualified to play in the NJCAA National Tournament in June: Anthony Lovechio, Patrick O’Connor and Andrew Schultheis.

Softball advanced to the NJCAA District Tournament after beating Massasoit Community College for the Region XXI title. The Lady Knights ended the season with a 25-9 overall record and a 12-0 record against region teams.

Tennis finished second in the NJCAA Division III Men’s National Tennis Championship held in Plano, Texas, in May after compiling an 11-1 record. CCRI won national championships in First Doubles (Michael Fallone and Anthony Lamborghini) and in Sixth Singles (Nick Morin), which earned each player First Team All-American honors.

Runner Bobby Allen placed first in the 1,500-meter and Cassandra Gustafson placed third in the javelin during the NJCAA Division III Outdoor Track and Field Championship. Head Coach Gregg Cornell ’85 received Coach of the Year honors.
The Rhode Island State Police, says Maj. David P. Tikoian ’88, is one of the few state police forces that still maintains a robust boxing program at its training academy.

Tikoian was trained in the sport during his time as a cadet in 1992 when his instructor shared a quote with him: “It’s not whether you get knocked down, it’s whether you get up.”

He has lived by this quote. Tikoian left the University of Rhode Island after just one semester in 1986 but decided to give school another chance at the Community College of Rhode Island.

“I quit school, and I wasn’t going to go back, but here I am a graduate of the Community College of Rhode Island and Bryant University and now a major on the state police,” Tikoian said.

“I don’t know if it was the class size or the atmosphere or the individual attention that you get there – it’s probably all those things combined – but I did very well at CCRI, and that was to me an example of ‘You get out of it what you put into it.’… CCRI gave me my second chance.”

Tikoian went on to Bryant University, graduated cum laude as a Business Administration major, and went to work for a construction company he had been with on and off since his teenage years, J.H. Lynch Construction in Cumberland.

Though he enjoyed the work, he soon decided to pursue a boyhood dream by applying to join a new class of cadets at the Rhode Island State Police. The father of Tikoian’s lifelong friend had been a trooper and Tikoian always thought it looked like a great career.

He was one of 35 cadets selected for the Class of 1992 out of 3,900 applicants. Tikoian and the other cadets completed 20 weeks of grueling paramilitary training, rising at dawn for physical training, extensive classroom instruction, military-style parade drilling, boxing, and vehicle and firearms training before going to bed at 10 p.m. and repeating the cycle.

Tikoian’s first assignment was to the state police barracks in Portsmouth, the farthest from his home in Smithfield. It is typical practice within the state police to send troopers far from home because it forces them to learn the state better.

Tikoian has served at all five Rhode Island state police barracks and spent 10 years on the Governor’s Executive Security Detail, protecting Govs. Lincoln Almond and Donald Carcieri.

Promoted to lieutenant, his next assignment was to Weekend Officer in Charge, the highest ranking commissioned officer on duty Friday through Monday for 12 hours at a time.

“That was probably one of the best jobs I had in the state police because I had an opportunity to get involved in all aspects of the operations, both as an investigator, administrator and a supervisor,” he said. “But the most gratifying part of that assignment was the ability to interact daily with our troopers. I’m proud of the work that they do.”

Tikoian now heads the inspectional services unit for the state police, making sure the organization complies with national standards for law enforcement agencies.

Without CCRI, he said, he never would have attended Bryant or made it into the state police.

“I’ve been to a lot of CCRI commencements [while on the Governor’s Security Detail] and I’ve seen the smiles on those graduates’ faces, young and old,” Tikoian said. “It’s something I can relate to.”
'70s
1977
Alan Cotnoir will celebrate 40 years as the music director at All Saints Church in August and 35 years as a deli associate and food certified safety clerk at Eastside Marketplace in September.

'80s
1985
After graduating from CCRI, Ann-Marie Peckham earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Nursing as well as a master’s degree in Business Administration. She is the chief clinical officer at the VNA of Cape Cod and was recently appointed to a three-year term on the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing by Gov. Deval Patrick. She has been a presenter at many state and national conferences and occasionally teaches nursing law and ethics for the University of Phoenix online as well as for Cape Cod Community College, where she serves on the advisory board for the nursing program.

'90s
1992
Oscar Almanzar has been named a Title I sales representative in the Title I home improvement lending team at Home Loan Investment Bank FSB.

Chiropractor Dr. Rodger Lincoln owns and operates New Hope Family Chiropractic in Pawtucket.

1996
Cheryl Delaney is a registered nurse in the labor and delivery unit at Massachusetts General Hospital.

'00s
2000
Marc Longpre and Bethany Bibeault were married at St. James Church in Lincoln on May 5, 2012.

2001
Jose Pineda and Nicole Brodeur '02 were married at St. Joseph’s Church in West Warwick on Oct. 1, 2011.

2002
Nicole Brodeur and Jose Pineda '01 were married at St. Joseph’s Church in West Warwick on Oct. 1, 2011.

2006
Melyssa Beaudry was named account manager at Glad Works in Pawtucket.

2007
Michele Roderick and Daniel Mello were married in St. Philip Church in Greenville on July 30, 2011.

Kenneth Viera and Aubrie Mazza '08 were married at St. Mark’s Church in Cranston on Oct. 15, 2011.

2008
Peter Karasuk was sworn in as one of the newest members of the Norwich Police Department on Jan. 23, 2012.

Aubrie Mazza and Kenneth Viera '07 were married at St. Mark’s Church in Cranston on Oct. 15, 2011.

2009
Matthew Labine was sworn in as an officer of the Woonsocket Police Department by Mayor Leo T. Fontaine in December 2011.

2010
Lauren Barnes and Robert Sloat were married at the Sheraton Nassau Beach Resort in the Bahamas on July 20, 2011.

Nursing Alumni Chapter gains new members
The CCRI Nursing Alumni Chapter sponsored its first coffee hour on March 8 at The Miriam Hospital. More than 25 students and graduates in the program came to talk about their experiences in Rhode Island health care. On May 16, Nursing alumni (pictured above) came together to celebrate this year’s graduates at the program’s annual pinning ceremony. The chapter will host a second coffee hour for students and alumni on July 19. See the calendar of events below for details.

Calendar of events
For more information about CCRI news and events, go to www.ccri.edu.

2012
Nursing Alumni Chapter Coffee Hour
A social event for students and graduates of CCRI’s Allied Health programs 6:30 to 9:30 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m., Thursday, July 19 Westmoreland Conference Room, Kent Hospital

Long Island vineyard tours and tastings
Sunday, Aug. 12
See back cover for details.

Classes begin
All campuses, Sept. 4

Fall Classic golf tournament
Monday, Sept. 17
Alpine Country Club, Cranston

Changing Lives Celebration
Thursday, Nov. 29
Rhodes on the Pawtuxet, Cranston

2013
Society of the Knights Induction Ceremony
6 p.m., Friday, April 5
Quidnessett Country Club, North Kingstown

In memoriam
The Green & White Alumni Magazine now publishes “In memoriam” in honor of college alumni. Because of space constraints, content is limited to an individual’s name and class year.

Paula E. Bonner ’78
Gail A. Cain ’85
Laura A. St. Germain ’04
Darla L. Van Eps ’89 ’02
The season represented a personal achievement as well for First Team All-American Dorsi, who originally attended CCRI six years ago, failed out and returned after serving in the military.

“I came back and accomplished everything that I wanted to individually and to go that far with the other guys [on the team] was an unbelievable experience,” he said.

The Knights were hosted during the Series by the Hartling family of Enid, who held two barbecues for the team and attended every game with water, Gatorade and sliced fruit. They opened their home to the Knights players and brought them to the homes of friends. The team rode dirt bikes, all-terrain vehicles and farm tractors and saw the sights of the small Oklahoma city.

“[The Hartlings] were very passionate about Oklahoma, which was fun for us because we saw a few things we wouldn’t have normally seen if we didn’t have them,” said Gavitt. “They were very nice to us.”

The Knights brought 16 freshmen to the series, seven of whom started in the games and all of whom are returning next year. Hopkins said that that experience could be a big advantage next season.

“Now that we know what [the Series] is all about, what we’re talking about is, ‘What do we need to do to get back there?’” He added, “We feel like we’ve got a lot of experience now and, hopefully, next year if we can put a few more pieces together we’ll have another great team.”

Just reaching the Series was an achievement for the Knights, who played 75 games throughout the spring and fall to break out of the challenging Eastern District.

“I think the biggest thing was getting there,” Hopkins said. “To get through our region. We’ve got a lot of respect for UConn Avery Point and we beat them five out of six times this year, swept the New England Tournament, and then we hosted the Eastern Regionals.”

He added, “To get to a World Series was an unbelievable experience and I won’t forget it. But now I’m hungry enough to know that this is what it takes to get there and we’ve got to go out there and recruit and work hard to get back there again. That’s our goal for next year.”

The elder Egan is a retired firefighter with his own consulting business and chose to finish his long-delayed degree after seeing his wife enroll at Salve Regina University and his sons at Rhode Island College and CCRI.

“My two sons were getting into college, so I saw how hard they were working and it motivated me even more,” he said.

He and John Jr. had a ritual of meeting at CCRI’s Flanagan Campus every Tuesday evening, when their schedules brought them close together.

“It’s an honor that we’re graduating together,” Egan said.

Graduate Amber Lewin was motivated by her father in a very different way, turning a family tragedy into a new start for herself.

“A couple of years ago, my dad was dying with Legionnaire’s disease,” Lewin said. “I promised to go back to college and get out of working in retail and this is my way of keeping my promise.”

Lewin earned a certificate in Early Childhood Education and Development and plans to go on to the University of Rhode Island.

Whatever their backgrounds or plans for the future, Di Pasquale said the hard work that the graduates put into earning their degrees will continue to serve them well.

“This is a life-changing day for all of you,” he said, “and you deserve all of the recognition you are getting.”

For more commencement coverage, including videos and photos, visit www.ccri.edu/commencement.
1972: Forty years ago

Commencement
Members of the graduating Class of 1972 march in the processional at the last commencement held at the Promenade campus. RIJC awarded degrees to 804 students and more than 600 of them transferred to four-year colleges and universities around the country, including Rhode Island College, the University of Rhode Island, Syracuse University, UCLA and the University of Texas at El Paso.
SAVE the DATE

18th Annual CCRI FALL CLASSIC
Monday, Sept. 17, 2012

Alpine Country Club
251 Pippin Orchard Road
Cranston, R.I.

For more information, to register or to become a sponsor, visit www.ccri.edu/president or call 401-825-1218.
Join the Community College of Rhode Island Alumni Association as we cross Long Island Sound on a deluxe motor coach to taste the wines of Duck Walk Vineyards and Palmer Vineyards on Sunday, Aug. 12.

This day trip includes lunch, shopping and wine tasting.