Focusing on the Future

Peggy La Tulip Focarino ’77
inspires innovation as first female
Commissioner of Patents

PLUS

■ Preserving Personal Pasts
■ From Patrolling Boroughs
to Protecting Borders
■ The Big Picture
■ A Winning Formula

SCAN THIS TO SEE A VIDEO OF PEGGY!
June 7-10, 2012

Join Oswego alumni from around the country for fun, food and fantastic sunsets! Come one, come all to the Oswego State Fair!

Everyone is welcome, and special activities are planned for milestone reunion classes:


Vie for the Reunion Giving Participation Cup, which will go to the class with the highest percentage of reunion gift donors.

Groups holding special mini-reunions are:

Admissions Tour Guides, Alpha Delta Eta, Alpha Sigma Chi, Beta Tau Epsilon, Delta Chi Omega/TKE, Delta Kappa Kappa, Honors Program, Omega Delta Phi, Omicron Xi – 30th Anniversary, Phi Lambda Phi, Phi Omicron Xi, Phi Sigma Phi, Pi Delta Chi, Sigma Gamma – 65th Anniversary, Sigma Tau Chi, Theta Chi Rho

Look for the Reunion 2012 reservation mailing soon, featuring the full listing of events! Advance reservations are required!

On-campus housing and event registration will be available beginning mid-April. Rooms will be available for Reunion guests who register in advance.

For the most up-to-date information on Reunion 2012, visit: www.oswego.edu/reunion
Reunion Hotline: 315-312-5559
E-mail: reunion@oswego.edu
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In an agency dedicated to original ideas, Margaret “Peggy” La Tulip Focarino ’77 is herself a pioneer. As the first female U.S. Commissioner of Patents, Focarino is in charge of innovation.

A Winning Formula  23
RIT Chemistry Professor Todd Pagano ’96 is making a difference — and winning awards — with his research, teaching and advocacy for undergraduate research opportunities.

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The StoryCorps national oral history project has collected more than 40,000 interviews over the past decade. Producer Jasmyn Belcher ’06 uncovers gems and searches for new stories to tell on National Public Radio.

From Patrolling Boroughs to Protecting Borders  28
Rafael G. “Jova” Rodriguez ’98 turned his 9/11 experience with the NYPD into a career investigating narcoterrorism. Terrorist organizations use the lucrative drug trade for funding, but Rodriguez helps bring kingpins to justice.

The Big Picture  31
Go behind the scenes with Oscar-nominated and Emmy-winning set decorator Debra Schutt ’77 as she as she stages the sets on screen using her sharp senses, a lively team and a little help from Craigslist.

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ON THE COVER: Margaret “Peggy” La Tulip Focarino ’77 holds a patent granted to her grandfather. Photo by David Snider/USPTO. Photo illustration by Elise Flanders.
President’s Desk

Throughout our 150-year history, a hallmark of an Oswego education has always been an emphasis on learning by doing. As I travel around the country, alumni from every era share stories of Oswego professors who involved them as equals in important research and creative projects. The pages of this magazine are brimming with examples, like Peggy La Tulip Focarino ’77, whose love of physics was nurtured in Oswego’s labs and now inspires her as she leads the U.S. Patent Office. RIT Chemistry Professor Todd Pagano ’96 has become a national advocate for involving undergraduates in scientific inquiry and has personally opened the doors to meaningful research for hundreds of deaf students. Debra Schutt ’77 takes skills she learned alongside Jon Vermilye ’66 and Ken Stone ’68 in Watertman Theatre to adorn the sets of HBO productions.

Now we are embarking on a new era of faculty/student collaboration. Oswego professors share their labs and studios with current undergraduates who contribute substantively to scholarly and artistic pursuits, and often present the results alongside their professors at conferences around the country and the world. Academic departments create capstone experiences to help students put their classroom learning into action. We have sought out external funding to help undergraduates study abroad. According to the Provost’s Office, we achieved a 23 percent increase in faculty-led student undergraduate research experiences during the 2010-2011 academic year, thanks in part to the donor-funded Summer Scholars program. We have also seen a 45 percent increase in campus grants to students for research and creative activity.

These types of opportunities are at the heart of the Oswego experience, and we are proud to make them possible for our students.

Deborah F. Stanley
President

FROM THE

Editor’s Pen

When I was in third grade, I started a newspaper at our elementary school, writing and editing and getting someone in the office to run it off on mimeo (photocopying was still rare!). I drew cartoons featuring two little elephants (who talked, of course!) and drew them, not only in the newspaper but on every chalkboard I could, sometimes getting into more than a bit of trouble. I wrote plays about holidays and historical figures and recruited classmates to act in them. In short, from the age of about 10, I knew I would be a writer, a storyteller.

So many times, when we write about alumni who have made a difference in the world, there is a common thread: A passion and a joy for intellectual or artistic or entrepreneurial endeavor that has carried them through life. And that passion, born in childhood, was often nurtured at Oswego. That’s the best part of what we do here — we help dreams grow. We enable people to become who they were meant to be — who they always knew they could be, if given the opportunity.

That’s why alumni love Oswego, why you support it and why it endures.

Scan the QR code at left to share your story of how Oswego nurtured you to become all you were meant to be.
Oswego wins $1.73M grant for trailblazing teacher training program

The School of Education will establish an innovative teacher training pilot program in nine high-need secondary schools in Oswego County, Syracuse and New York City.

The state Education Department will use $1.73 million in federal Race to the Top funding to support a three-year, graduate-level proposal to raise the bar on traditional student teaching.

“The grant is going to allow Oswego to take a leadership role in these sorts of teacher-residency programs.”

— Lorrie Clemo, interim provost and vice president of academic affairs

The Oswego Residency Initiative for Teacher Excellence, or O-RITE, encompasses two school placements totaling an academic year as well as summer residencies with two community organizations and a variety of other degree requirements.

“I think it (the grant) is going to allow Oswego to take a leadership role in these sorts of teacher-residency programs,” said Lorrie Clemo, interim provost and vice president of academic affairs. “One of the reasons this money is so important is that it will enable us to reconstitute the teacher-preparation model for high-need schools.”

Candidates’ undergraduate degrees must be in math, a science or linguistics. Full scholarships and living stipends in exchange for a commitment to stay in the district after the placement ends are aimed at midcareer professionals.

A former teacher in the Bronx, O-RITE Field Coordinator Anneke McEvoy is familiar with the lack of science and math courses — and people to teach them — in disadvantaged districts.

“We really are targeting shortage areas,” McEvoy said. “Right now I’m reaching out to schools and finding out what they need from us in terms of plans and goals.”

Project leader Dr. Barbara Garii, associate dean of education, said the new program presents an opportunity to add special education to the secondary education experience.

“If we combined secondary education with the special education, then we saw that students who come through our program could walk into schools — in Syracuse, in Oswego County, in New York City — with really solid grounding that would enable them to support students across boundaries,” Garii said.

— Jeff Rea ’71
New minor in sustainability studies underscores going green

A NEW MINOR IN SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES lends energy and coordination to a wide variety of courses that feature ideas, projects and policies for better stewardship of the world.

"Interest in sustainability education is growing among faculty and certainly among students, so we are hoping to add more choices, and we also are hoping to have students involved in projects so they can get experience while they are here," said Lisa Glidden, assistant professor of political science and an adviser to students in the minor.

Two years ago, then-political science major Rachel Rossi '11 asked Glidden why Oswego did not have a certificate or a minor in environmental studies. Thanks to the efforts of enthusiastic professors and administrators, the minor recently gained final approval through campus governance and five students so far have completed paperwork to enroll.

The minor provides academic support for the vision behind the Presidents’ Climate Commitment, which President Deborah F. Stanley signed in June 2007, and for sustainability efforts that gained new momentum on campus this summer with submission of the college’s first STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System) report.

Requirements include core courses in geology and in economics/political science; a choice among biology, anthropology and physics classes; and electives in several subjects. — Jeff Rea '71

Technology education major Tim Governale '12, left, holds a photovoltaic cell used to convert light energy to electricity while Steve Badaracco '13 measures energy output in Professor Tom Kubicki's class in energy technology. The course is one of 14 that students may apply toward the electives requirement for a new 21-credit-hour minor in sustainability studies.

Chemistry students got a firsthand look into what it is like to work in the field of material science recently when they toured Corning with faculty members Kristin Gublo '96, M '99, pictured left, and Fehmi Damkaci, third from right. The students learned the 160-year history of Corning, including innovations such as the light bulb, Pyrex, catalytic converters, and Clear Curve and Gorilla glass. They visited reliability and mechanical science, organic chemistry and display applications labs. Amy MacDougall '94 and Meghan Lyons '04 welcomed them during the tour, which was inspired by the Spring 2011 Oswego magazine feature on Corning Glass Technologies Chief Technology Officer Peter Bocko '75. The Compass, chemistry department and Chemistry Club funded the trip. Pictured in front of a glass periodic table of elements, the students are, from left, Jacob Schwartz '13, Ryan Cotroneo '12, Yoshihiro Miura '12, Andrew Preischer '12, Shirley Peng '12, Adam Szymaniak '12, Chris Destevens '12, Brianna Graham '12, Joshua Cruz '13, Ned Karcich '11, Denise Ward '11, Ryan Smith '13, Tamara Nsouli '13, Kallb St. Ange '12, Damkaci, Megan Wagner '09, M '12 and Lyndon Flynn-Roach '14.
New photography minor develops appeal across disciplines

The art department this fall rolled out a new minor in photography that offers a 21-credit focus to a popular medium among students.

“For students majoring in journalism and graphic design, in particular, this allows them to list the minor on their résumés,” said Cynthia Clabough, art department professor and chair. “So even though they could have done all this study before, it allows an employer or graduate school to see they were focused and dedicated.”

Clabough said alumni working in photography throughout the region helped motivate the creation of a photo minor.

“The distinction gives the students just that little extra bit of confidence they may need, and certainly gives the employers more confidence, too,” she said.

The photo minor is the latest among a number of minors related to the art department that have strong interdisciplinary interest and cooperation: arts management, museum studies, expressive art therapy and audio design and production.

“So this is in that tradition,” Clabough said. “We don’t always call these courses interdisciplinary, but it does show cooperation. That interdepartmental, inter-area cooperation, we do well here at Oswego. That’s key. It’s key to what our departments have been willing to invest in.”

— Jeff Rea ’71

International Center of Syracuse honors Oswego’s Kanbur

THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF SYRACUSE bestowed its International Educator Award on SUNY Oswego’s Shashi Kanbur in November at the Central New York International Citizen Award Banquet at Onondaga Community College.

The award recognizes an outstanding educator whose teaching, research, creative work, scholarship or services have significantly promoted global learning outcomes among students in a college or school setting, according to the center.

Gurdeep Skolnik, coordinator of Oswego’s International Language and Education Center, nominated Kanbur for the honor in recognition of his “significant contributions towards internationalization at SUNY Oswego,” she said.

An associate professor in the physics and earth sciences departaments, Kanbur is also a faculty fellow in the President’s Office this year. He has played a key role in developing SUNY Oswego’s Global Laboratory.

India native Kanbur has an international reputation in astrophysics research. Since his arrival at Oswego in 2005, he has published 23 papers with international collaborators in the top peer-reviewed journals in astrophysics. Currently he has active collaborations with researchers in Taiwan, Chile, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, South Africa and Japan.

— Julie Harrison Blissert
Scanning electron microscope offers nanoscale views

When Fehmi Damkaci peers at the computer monitor next to the gleaming electron gun of the college's new scanning electron microscope, he sees the future — a vital piece of equipment for the sciences and their new home.

As the nanoscale — a nanometer is one-billionth of a meter — images appear in high definition, Damkaci reminisces about having to travel to Syracuse to obtain sample data about atomic structures that were once only theorized … and not being able to touch the machine.

“This has been used mostly by nanotechnology-related research and engineering,” said Damkaci, associate professor of chemistry and project leader for acquisition and implementation of the scanning electron microscope, or SEM. “But now the use of the equipment has extended into biology and materials science and anthropology, geology — all different areas.”

The college already has a room planned in its rising $118 million Sciences and Engineering Innovation Corridor for the new Japanese Electron Optical Lab, or JEOL, JSM-6610LV currently housed in Snygg Hall.

“I started teaching nanotechnology, and I’m planning to apply for a [National Science Foundation] grant to increase nanotech education on campus,” Damkaci said. Students have already been training to use the equipment. “Having an SEM on site for educational purposes — that’s great.

“Currently we just teach it, but students don’t get to see an SEM,” he added. “Now, when they graduate, they will be able to say, ‘I know how to use an SEM,’ and that makes our students more marketable.”

With more than $1 trillion in federal and state funds expected over the next few years, job growth to support this explosion would leap from 150,000 nanotechnology workers in 2008 to 800,000 in 2015 nationally, a National Nanotechnology Initiative report noted.

“The report also says that by 2012-13, nanotechnology will be a common field of study in undergraduate science education,” Damkaci said. “We are positioning ourselves right now just ahead of that phase.”

— Jeff Rea ’71

College rolls out mobile website to meet growing demand

THE LAUNCH OF THE COLLEGE’S NEW mobile website allows users to connect with the campus through a location-based map, interactive directory and many other features.

The mobile-friendly site at m.oswego.edu officially launched last fall to meet increasing demand from those accessing the college website on smartphones and tablets. Traffic via mobile devices to oswego.edu more than doubled from the previous year.

The mobile-friendly map feature has GPS functionality so students and visitors to campus can find events, lectures and athletic contests.

Other icons connect to emergency contact information, a staff and student directory, news, athletics, social media links and Penfield Library’s mobile presence.

— Tim Nekritz M ’05
Oswego named a top-producing Fulbright campus

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION has recognized Oswego as one of this year’s Fulbright Scholarship “top producers.” Two Oswego faculty members are studying and teaching overseas on Fulbright awards: one in India and the other in Kenya.

The top producer nationally in Oswego’s category of master’s universities was Towson University, with four recipients.

In addition to Oswego’s two faculty recipients — Dr. Geraldine Forbes of the history department and Dr. Faith Maina of the curriculum and instruction department — Dr. Joshua McKeown, Oswego’s director of international education and programs, was selected to participate in a Fulbright-Nehru International Education Administrators Seminar in India.

— Staff report

A century-old landmark peeks through a forest of rebar as the structure for the estimated $118 million Sciences and Engineering Innovation Corridor grows rapidly on east campus across Centennial Drive from the Campus Center. Linking to the new construction, 49-year-old Piez Hall is receiving an “extreme makeover” of its interior as well as some exterior updates. Sheldon Hall’s exterior is also undergoing a facelift as part of a $10 million historic preservation.

Find the Founder!

IN THE FALL/WINTER 2011 ISSUE, the founder could be found in the lower right hand corner of the Rice Creek photograph on page 9. The grand prize winner of a College Store gift certificate and Sheldon Hall print is Martha Lee Hutchinson ’95. Winning Sheldon Hall prints are Steve Yeager ’79, Timothy J. Siembor ’80, Diana Major ’08, Christine Bradley Spink ’74 and Marilyn Binder Unger ’52.

A tiny replica of the Sheldon statue pictured here is hidden somewhere in this issue. Find the Founder and send us a letter with the location and page number, your name, class year and address. We will draw one entry at random from all the correct answers and the winner will receive a $25 gift certificate to the College Store and a print of Sheldon Hall. The next five entries drawn will receive Sheldon Hall prints. Send your entry to Find the Founder, King Alumni Hall, SUNY Oswego, Oswego, NY 13126. Entries must be postmarked by June 1.
Two new graduate certificate programs in health will help address a pressing need, fueled by federal mandates and incentives, for trained workers to make medical records available electronically across the spectrum of health care providers.

A 15-credit-hour certificate in health information technology will help prepare systems professionals to deal with the latest innovations for handling medical information securely and seamlessly.

Another certificate will provide training and background in integrated health systems for medical workers dealing with human-computer interaction, communication techniques and social networking technologies in the rapid transition from paper-based health records systems to digitized ones.

The human-computer interaction master’s degree program, directed by Damian Schofield, will offer both certificates with assistance from faculty in computer science and psychology.

“I do know that the practitioners in hospitals and the physicians are very happy we are doing this,” said David King, dean of graduate studies. “From the first time we met with the MDA (former Metropolitan Development Association) and regional hospitals and other health care providers, all have said there’s a really urgent need for training and advancing skill sets in this area.”

“There’s a really urgent need for training and advancing skill sets in this area.”

— David King, Dean of Graduate Studies

The Division of Extended Learning, working with Graduate Studies, did a market survey three years ago of health care agencies, hospitals, insurers, physicians’ groups and other practitioners to learn what kinds of educational programs were needed for the conversion to networked electronic medical records. King and others also had discussions at Welch Allyn, a leading manufacturer of medical instruments, and other area businesses.

The certificate programs at this stage largely will be delivered through the Metro Center, online and on the main campus, King said. The college eventually will package modules-immediate training in technology-rich areas such as data mining—that workers in the health care field can take online, without signing up for the entire certificate program.

The two new certificates bring to five the number of health-related graduate degree or certificate programs SUNY Oswego offers. The others are the mental health counseling master’s degree program with state licensure, and graduate certificates in gerontology and play therapy. Five others ranging from trauma studies to health communication are in development.

— Jeff Rea ’71
Sciences project heats up

CONTRACTORS HAVE DRILLED THE 240th and final geothermal well to help heat and cool the new Science and Engineering Innovation Corridor.

"With that, this completes over 22.7 miles of drilling and [nearly] 46 miles of piping that went into the wells," said Allen Bradberry, pictured far right, the college’s liaison with construction companies working on the sciences project.

The geothermal field located between Sheldon and Snygg halls will use energy created by temperature differentials and delivered by heat pumps to help reduce fossil-fuel energy use in the new sciences complex.

Meanwhile, contractors have delivered more than 7,000 of the anticipated 13,000 cubic yards of concrete for the new structure, which has risen to the third of four floors, according to Bradberry, who is pictured here with, from left, Ryan Baye of American Auger & Ditching Co. of Constantia and Mark Kentile, regional director of SUNY Construction Fund.

Oswego team develops business, app in 54 hours

Five SUNY Oswego students showed off their computer science skills and business savvy in a business-startup competition that brought 146 students and faculty from 10 colleges together with scientists, engineers, software developers, designers and other professional mentors to harness entrepreneurial drive throughout the region.

The team earned fourth place for developing a plan to start a company called SpecialMenu with a built-from-scratch mobile Web app that finds specials at nearby restaurants. They were among 17 teams taking part in Startup Weekend, an intense 54-hour business planning and entrepreneurial training event that took place Nov. 4 to 6 in Syracuse.

“We made a business plan, created a presentation and developed a working prototype for our app all in that time," said computer science major Nicholas Poorman ’12.

As one of the top five, the startup has been promised space in the Tech Garden, which offers offices and conference spaces for developing businesses.

— Samantha Yeh ’12
Oswego class successfully summits Mount Kilimanjaro

A 23-member team from SUNY Oswego successfully reached the top of Mount Kilimanjaro in mid-January as part of a class that literally brought learning to new heights.

The physical education course co-instructed by experienced climber and Director of Career Services Gary Morris ’88 covered mountain-climbing techniques and preparation in terms of fitness, health, nutrition, essential gear and travel to Tanzania to scale the highest peak in Africa.

At 19,340 feet high, Kilimanjaro is also the world’s highest stand-alone peak. The team’s ascent and descent took eight days and required assistance from a team of porters.

“One of our strengths is hands-on learning, and students learned about working as a team, how to prepare their minds and bodies for the trek and about the importance of setting and reaching goals,” said Lorrie Clemo, interim provost and vice president of academic affairs. “The next time they face a challenge during their college years or careers, they can look at everything they did to scale Mount Kilimanjaro and be confident they can succeed at anything.”

Team members also took time to visit a school in a Maasai village to distribute school supplies as well as to go on a safari.

— Tim Nekritz M ’05

Leave Green to reduce waste, need

STUDENTS ARE INVITED TO HELP people in need in the local community while saving the environment by donating goods that they no longer need. With help from the Newman Center’s People Against Poverty program, SUNY Oswego began the Leave Green program.

Leave Green encourages students to donate food, clothing and household items at Swetman Gymnasium. Food is donated to local food pantries while clothing and household items are offered in a “garage sale.” The proceeds go directly to help people in the community.

For more than 20 years, the Newman Center has been the location for the sale. One function of People Against Poverty, a committee of the Newman Center, is to have “students donate their items to us, instead of the dumpster,” longtime volunteer Kathy Brooks Nyman ’74 explained. Fellow alumna Laura Bush Angelina ’70 is also a member of the committee.

“It’s a win-win for everyone,” Director of Campus Life Richard Hughes says. “For students, it gives them somewhere to bring things they no longer have use for, and provides for someone else. It’s good for the college, because it keeps items out of the waste stream.”

The Leave Green program helps the local community and contributes to the college’s participation in climate initiatives, like the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System, or STARS; and the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment, of which President Deborah F. Stanley is a signatory.

Last year, on-campus students donated items directly to the Newman Center, while off-campus students brought 900 pounds of items to the Swetman Gym.

This year, all items will be brought to the gym, sorted, weighed and sold. Items that do not sell will be donated to Catholic Charities’ St. Vincent de Paul store in Oswego. To get involved, contact richard.hughes@oswego.edu.

— Emily Longeretta ’12
Sgro named alumni director

THERE’S A NEW FACE IN KING ALUMNI HALL — and soon at Oswego alumni events everywhere.

After 27 years of leadership by Betsy Oberst, who is now associate vice president for alumni relations and stewardship, the Oswego Alumni Association welcomes a new director of alumni and parent relations: Michael Sgro.

“My dream is that every alum will believe that the relationship can change and grow stronger, even if they have not been involved for 30 years.”

— Michael Sgro, director of alumni relations

He will oversee the direction of all alumni programs and initiatives at Oswego including reunions, regional events and programs, and student/alumni programs.

“We are excited to welcome Michael into the Oswego Alumni family,” said Oberst. “He has a wealth of experience and many exciting ideas.”

Sgro has been a higher education professional for 15 years, beginning his career in residence life and student activities before moving into alumni relations and marketing.

The Syracuse native most recently was marketing and communications manager at Campus Groups, Novalsys, Inc. He served as assistant director of alumni and parent programs at his undergraduate alma mater, Le Moyne College in Syracuse, from 2006 to 2010, and prior to that was senior associate director of alumni affairs at New York University’s Leonard N. Stern School of Business.

He is the founder and a frequent contributor to the blog Alumni Trending, which has grown to more than 600 participants in its first month. It is a forum for sharing best practices among alumni relations professionals over social networks including LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

“I get great joy by working with alumni and parents, and alumni who are parents,” said Sgro. He hopes to especially connect with alumni with children who are busy running between schools and soccer practices, and find ways to engage them with Oswego.

“I’m really excited about connecting with Oswego graduates and parents whom we already know, and meeting thousands more, identifying what they love about the institution and why they come back,” Sgro said.

He is enthusiastic about partnering with colleagues across campus, sharing his expertise in things like event planning, and helping to advance the goals of the institution.

He is proudest of his partnerships with community organizations, like Le Moyne’s early collaboration with the Rosamond Gifford Zoo’s Brew at the Zoo. “Supporting your community is what it’s all about,” he said. “Your community thrives and we (the alumni association) thrive.”

Stressing that “every alum is different,” Sgro hopes to provide a menu of opportunities so alumni who are busy can choose the ways they can become involved.

“Oswego’s 150th anniversary is a great time to continue traditions, but also to start new ones,” Sgro said. He stresses that alumni can become involved in multiple ways that “meet the needs of people today,” from providing email updates to helping current students prepare for or begin their careers, speaking to classes on campus, hosting an event in their homes, or helping a fellow graduate land a job.

He hopes to use social media to engage and connect alumni and to help them share their Oswego stories.

“I would love to, but I know we will not get all 75,000 alumni back to campus,” Sgro said. “So I want to put Oswego on the brain — every day — of our graduates, have them thinking about Oswego every day.

“My dream is that every alum will believe that the relationship can change and grow stronger, even if they have not been involved for 30 years.”

Michael Sgro was recently named the new director of alumni and parent relations at SUNY Oswego.

On the road again!

In 2012, we are launching a new Regional Alumni Program.

- Meet fellow graduates virtually or in person
- Patronize alumni-owned businesses
- Connect as a group at local community events
- Share your Oswego story
- And so much more

Recruiting volunteers, everywhere. Contact Michael Sgro at michael.sgro@oswego.edu or call 315-312-2030 to get involved as a leader in your community.
Women’s Soccer

The Oswego State women’s soccer team experienced a banner year in 2011, posting its best record since 1996 with an overall mark of 11-8. The season culminated with a win over Brockport, 2-1, to get the 2011 Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference Upstate New York Championship for just the second time in program history while also avenging an earlier loss to the Golden Eagles.

Nikki Liadka ’14 and Shelly Bateman ’13 supplied a solid one-two scoring punch for Oswego State, as Liadka tallied 29 points (12 goals, five assists) and Bateman posted 19 points (six goals, seven assists).

Liadka was named to the All-SUNY Athletic Conference Second Team as well as the Most Outstanding Player of the ECAC Upstate New York Championship and Bateman received Third Team All-SUNYAC honors.

Men’s Soccer

The Oswego State men’s soccer team opened the 2011 season with its best record since 1999 at 5-1-0, but struggled down the stretch as it posted an overall record of 5-10-1 and a conference record of 0-8-1.

Bryan Pacchiana ’12 earned third team all-conference honors for the third straight year, becoming the first Laker men’s soccer player to be a three-time All-SUNYAC selection since Scott Brown ’06 was selected in 2002, 2004 and 2005.

Women’s Tennis

A young Oswego State women’s tennis team with just two seniors turned in a win over Wells to post a 1-13 record. The Lakers were led by Christine Ripple ’12 at No. 6 singles, as she finished with a record of 6-7.

Volleyball

The Oswego State volleyball team posted an overall record of 7-22 and a conference record of 0-8.

Stephanie Bailey ’15 posted a team-high 206 kills and 98 total blocks, the highest since 2002.

Men’s Golf

The Laker men’s golf team posted a second-place finish at the Potsdam Quad and a pair of third-place finishes at the Oswego State and Elmira Fall Invitational with identical scores of 320 before placing sixth at the rain-shortened ECAC Metro/Upstate Championships with a team score of 345.

Kyle Brockmann ’15 tied for medalist honors at the Oswego State Invitational with a round of 74. Brockmann also placed fourth at the Elmira Invitational with a score of 76, 13th at the St. Lawrence Invitational with combined rounds of 150, and tied for 30th at the Hamilton Invitational with a two-day total of 157.

Colt Tooley ’14 turned in the top individual result at the ECAC Championships with a round of 84 to tie for 22nd.
Cross Country

The Oswego State men’s and women’s cross country teams finished the 2011 campaigns strong as the men placed 14th out of 40 teams at the NCAA Atlantic Regional Championships and the women finished 24th out of 36 squads. The Lakers also had solid showings at the SUNYAC Championships hosted by SUNY New Paltz where the men erased more than 80 points from the 2010 team total to finish four points out of fifth place in sixth, while the women placed eighth.

Dylan Hardwick ’12 and Meghan Murphy ’15 were the top Laker finishers every week. Hardwick capped off the season with an 8K personal-best time of 26:13 to place 27th among 272 runners at the regional meet. He earned 13th place and Second Team All-SUNYAC honors at the SUNYAC Championships with a time of 26:42 to become the first Laker male harrier to receive all-conference honors since Weston Fellows ’06 in 2005.

On the women’s side, Murphy registered her best time and the eighth-fastest time in program history in a 6K distance with a time of 24:37.10 for 35th at the SUNYAC Championships.

Field Hockey

The Oswego State field hockey team won five of its final seven games to post a 7-10 overall record with seven of the losses coming in one-goal decisions, including three in overtime. The Lakers posted a SUNYAC record of 2-4 with wins over Morrisville and Oneonta. The latter was Oswego State’s first victory over the Red Dragons since 2008.

Kelly Collins ’12 paced the squad offensively with 25 points on 11 goals and three assists. She also paced the SUNYAC in points with six goals and an assist for 13 points in six league contests to be named first team all-conference for the second time. The 2008 SUNYAC Rookie of the Year ended her career with 80 career points (31 goals, 18 assists), which ranks fourth all-time on the program’s points list and third in career goals and assists.

Defender Ashley Collins ’14 joined Kelly Collins on the all-conference team as a second team pick after adding three goals and an assist.

— Adele Burk, Sports Information Director
Anonymous Alumnus to Bequeath $5 Million to Oswego

A native of Central New York who used a math degree from SUNY Oswego to make a fortune in the real estate business has informed the college of his intention to bequeath approximately $5 million to his alma mater in support of the Possibility Scholarship program.

It is the largest planned gift in the school’s history, and will affect the lives of generations of students who otherwise might not be able to afford a college education. By supporting math and science education for New York state students, the gift will potentially lift the whole area economically.

But, at the donor’s request, his identity will remain anonymous.

“This is a transformative gift that will make individual dreams come true and can help boost the economy of our state,” said President Deborah F. Stanley. “With this gift, our generous donor is opening the door to a college education and a better life for many of our future students.”

The Possibility Scholarship provides talented students from New York state who want to study in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields, with the financial help they need to attend SUNY Oswego.

The alumnus made clear that his intention is to promote the study of math, which he feels is crucial to success in most fields. “Math is a universal language and supports every other subject,” the donor said. “Regardless of what career path one takes, a strong math background is important to excel.”

As a soldier toward the end of the Vietnam War, he used his math skills to help the Pentagon determine which troops to bring home first. After his service he began a career in real estate, where math again helped him succeed. “I made most of my money from real estate investing,” he said. “Math was very instrumental in helping me to evaluate investments.”

The donor wants to keep America more competitive in the global economy, he said, by reversing a trend toward the acceptance of poor math skills in this country’s students.

The alumnus focused his generosity on the Possibility Scholarship program because it covers all tuition, fees, and room and board, in coordination with any other grants or scholarships awarded, for qualifying students for four full years.

The donor knows how important such aid can be. A Regents Scholar, he worked hard to pay his way through college. Scrubbing pots and pans in the dining hall, serving as resident assistant in a Lakeside residence hall, and bartending at a local establishment helped him pay for his college degree.

The Possibility Scholarship’s tuition benefit “takes away one more fear or impediment to concentrating,” he said. “Most people, when they have problems in life, it is usually financially originated. Remove that element and it makes people’s lives more stress-free.”

An anonymous donor has announced his intention to bequeath $5 million to benefit the Possibility Scholarship program. The initiative supports students in the science, technology, engineering and math fields.

The alumnus said he wants to give back to Oswego because of the great experience he had at the college, and he wants to help others — who might not otherwise be able to afford higher education — to have the same great experience.

He made the most of his time at Oswego as a very active student, taking part in varied and enriching experiences, including student media.

A third-generation American, he formed a bond with a foreign language professor, Dr. Joseph Wiecha, who helped him get a scholarship to study one summer in the land of his ancestors. “I considered that the highlight of my life, going over there,” he said. Possibility Scholars travel to one of

Julibeth Saez ’12 aims for a career as a veterinarian.

The Fund for Oswego

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several Global Laboratory partners that Oswego has on every continent to study and work on science projects with researchers in their fields.

Despite wanting his name kept private for now, the donor said he hopes that his gift will inspire others to support Oswego and its students with an estate gift, especially since state budget support for the college is diminishing.

"You have to give back, especially if Oswego's been good to you," he said. He also pointed out that bequests to a charitable organization given during or after a donor's lifetime reduce the taxable portion of the estate, thus avoiding the maximum potential 55 percent estate tax. "I would rather give a dollar than pay 55 cents to Uncle Sam," he said.

The bottom line for this savvy investor and philanthropist is investing in the next generation. "It all starts with an education. That's the foundation of any life," he said. With his generous bequest, he will provide that foundation for countless students who follow in his footsteps at Oswego.

—Michele Reed
Heart, Confidence Key to James’ Legacy

He served his country with distinction in the military and shared his knowledge as a professor at other colleges, but when Jack James ’62 thinks about his legacy, he wants it to be where his heart is — forever at Oswego.

A member of the Sheldon Legacy Society — a group of loyal Oswego supporters who have remembered the college in their estate plans — James has bequeathed 70 percent of his estate to Oswego.

“When I meet my scholarship winners, I come away humbled. They make enormous sacrifices, working full time and raising families, while they earn their degrees.”

Jack James ’62

His personal confidence is rooted in his long involvement with the college as a member of the Oswego College Foundation Board of Directors, Reunion volunteer and former chair of The Fund for Oswego, all of which afforded him the opportunity to work with President Deborah F. Stanley and key members of her administration.

He appreciated the “prudent, fiduciary” application of gifts by the college. “To endow a gift means it will be here in the future, forever,” he says. For him, the college inspires confidence that future leaders of the institution will use the gifts wisely.

The Jack C. James ’62 Scholarship Fund, now in its fifth year, was his first initiative. It provides scholarship help for non-traditional students, a demographic James taught at National Louis University as an adjunct professor in the College of Management and Business.

“When I meet my scholarship winners, I come away humbled,” he says, “They make enormous sacrifices, working full time and raising families, while they earn their degrees.” Knowing he provides financial help to them is meaningful to James, especially in the current tight economy.

Likewise, supporting the School of Education through a student-programming fund speaks to his heart. Education is a family tradition, with both his mother and sister serving as teachers.

“When I returned from the military, I realized my real love was education,” says the Vietnam-era veteran, who retired from the U.S. Marine Corps with the rank of colonel.

“When you invest in education, you are investing in the future,” he says.

He helped build 26 bases while serving in the USMC. Knowing the work that goes into bringing facilities on line, he says he was “wowed” by what the college has done to upgrade its infrastructure in recent years. So he has endowed a fund to help with future campus improvements.

“When I return to campus now I see the phoenix rising,” he says. “I think back to the [Quonset] huts” that were on campus when he was a student in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

“I have no idea what the needs will be on campus years from now, but I know there will be needs,” he says. “And I have the confidence in the people who put all this brick and mortar into place to use my gift wisely.”

Following his heart and choosing to invest his philanthropy in an institution where he is confident it will be wisely managed is key to Jack James’ legacy. ●

— Michele Reed
Anniversary Gift Celebrates 60 Years, Funds the Future

AFTER 59 YEARS OF MARRIAGE, Ken ‘54 and Anne MacDonald Sherman ‘53 had amassed quite a collection of anniversary gifts. In fact, in recent years they requested friends and family to donate to a favorite charity as a gift to them.

Last year for their 60th anniversary, those friends and family did them one better and got them a legacy: A SUNY Oswego scholarship to call their own.

“I can’t tell you how surprised we were about the scholarship,” Anne said. “It never occurred to us that we could do something like this.”

Everyone from their closest family members to neighborhood “kids” they’ve known for decades chipped in to endow the fund. The annual award will go to an education major.

Both Anne and Ken spent their careers as teachers, retiring in the 1980s. “Our whole lives changed because we were fortunate enough to get a college education,” Anne said. Both she and Ken were the first in their families to go to college.

“I think [our family] knew how much Oswego meant to us,” Anne said. “We had very happy years there.”

The Shermans were married while they were students and took up their first residence in Splinter Village. When they graduated, demand for teachers was high and both Anne and Ken made a satisfying career and earned a comfortable retirement from it.

They will continue to contribute to the endowment, said Anne. The first Sherman Scholarship will be awarded for the 2012-13 academic year and the endowed fund will continue in perpetuity.

“The scholarship is something that will go on when we’re gone and hopefully give someone else the chance to have the experience we had,” she said.

For information on establishing a scholarship, visit oswego.edu/giving/scholarships or write to scholar@oswego.edu.

— Shane M. Liebler

Graduate students who completed intensive summer internships or work projects under the Festa Graduate Leadership Fellowships program pose Dec. 15 with Lorrie Clemo, right, interim provost and vice president of academic affairs. From left are Cala Glatz ‘05, M ‘11; Alex Klatsky M ‘12; Julia Kester ‘10, M ‘12; David Stone M ‘12; and Jessica Korkue M ‘12.

Fred Festa ‘81, and his wife, Mary Lynn Barbero Festa ‘82, provided support for the fellowships, whose stipends of up to $10,000 help underwrite unique, professional leadership experiences in recipients’ fields of interest.
When Margaret “Peggy” La Tulip Focarino ’77 was a fifth grader in the ’60s, most girls her age wanted Barbie dolls or Easy-Bake ovens. She asked her parents for a telescope.

The little girl who so loved science and discovery became the only woman majoring in physics during her time at SUNY Oswego. And she’s still breaking new ground.

In January, Focarino made history when she took office as the first female Commissioner of Patents in the U. S. Patent and Trademark Office’s 222-year history.

The focus and vision the star-gazer exhibited at an early age serves her well as she leads a massive federal agency, with an annual budget of $2.17 billion and a highly educated, diverse workforce numbering more than 10,000.

Directly across from her desk in her 10th floor office overlooking the USPTO’s modern campus in Alexandria, Va. — the very first thing she placed in her new office as commissioner — hangs Patent No. 3,114,204, granted to her grandfather, Joseph La Tulip of Oswego, N.Y. He registered a safe razor blade disposal system in 1963, and she looks often at that family heirloom to remind her of just why she’s there.

“Our mission is to encourage innovation and invention,” she says. “That ultimately creates jobs, contributing to economic recovery.”

She refers to the USPTO as the “Innovation Agency,” calling its role in generating commerce “extremely critical for the country.”

There’s a personal sense of accomplishment, too. “It’s very satisfying when you see something you’ve granted a patent on,” says Focarino, who early in her career examined patents for solar technology, heating and cooling systems and combustion systems. She points out that everything people use in their daily lives — from safety pins to shoes to smart phones — had their origins in some inventor’s dreams.

In fact, walking into the USPTO’s Madison Building, a towering edifice of brick, glass and steel with Focarino’s office at the peak of a dazzling atrium, a visitor can’t miss the message. In January, a massive display of just a selection of the late Apple CEO Steve Jobs’ 323 patents filled the floor, arrayed on 30 giant replicas of the iPhone.

To the right of the entrance is the National Inventor’s Hall of Fame museum, this year focusing on fitness. Exercise guru Jack LaLanne’s leotard and juicer are on display, along with artifacts including John Harvey Kellogg’s original light box and “vibratory chair” from his Battle Creek Sanitarium; designs for the ThighMaster and Nike waffle-sole running shoe, and penny scales that give both weight and fortune.

Talking portraits (a la the Harry Potter movies) of Thomas Jefferson, continued on page 20
Future
James Madison, medical self-testing pioneer Helen Free, Thomas Edison and Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak recite a history of the USPTO, founded in Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution. In his role as Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson was the first Commissioner of Patents, and he carried applications home to study, storing them under his bed, thereby giving rise to the name “shoes,” given to the USPTO’s former cataloguing drawers for patent applications.

Eye on the Future
For all its history, the Patent Office is a forward-looking institution, and no one recognizes that more than Commissioner Focarino.

“We are part of something that has a long history, but also a tremendous future,” she says.

“Although we are steeped in history … we are pushing the envelope, always trying to do better. We are not content to keep things running, we must continue to make things better.”

— Peggy La Tulip Focarino ’77

Oswego, women examiners were few in number and she met with her share of opposition. Not as much as famed battlefield nurse Clara Barton, who as a confidential clerk to the commissioner of patents in 1854 was the first woman to be paid the same as male employees, causing them to blow smoke in her face and spit tobacco juice in her direction.

Focarino met with more subtle resistance. An avid bowler since the time she was big enough to hold a bowling ball, she wanted to join the agency league in the late ’70s to meet people and make new friends. Some of the men quit the league, one citing the fact that “his wife wouldn’t approve” of him bowling with a woman.

The workforce Focarino leads now is much more diverse. More than 7,000 examiners represent virtually every segment of the population. A Community Day celebration each year recognizes their vibrant diversity.

A young and highly educated employee base — most have science, math or engineering degrees — they face modern challenges like isolation as they work remotely or spend long stretches in front of computers instead of physically tracking down paperwork and sketches.

“Our collaboration tools are robust,” Focarino said, with many ways for examiners to stay connected, including instant messaging, video conferencing and computer chatting.
‘Culture of Collaboration’

Another area in which she broke ground is that of labor-management relations. When Focarino was deputy commissioner, the USPTO’s director, Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property, David Kappos, gave her the authority to work directly with the Patent Office Professional Association on several major issues with a decades-long adversarial history.

“Peggy created an entirely different environment,” says Robert D. Budens, POPA president. “She took what we had for many years — a culture of conflict — and turned it into a culture of collaboration.”

He attributes this success in part to Focarino’s personality and in part to her willingness to listen and work together to achieve a win-win outcome. “She is very intelligent and an excellent manager and has a great command of the big picture and the things that need to be done,” says Budens. “She is also willing to listen to us and the issues that we bring to the table when negotiating.

“Peggy came in with a desire to work with us and listen to us — and we came in with the same desire. It has grown into a good healthy relationship for the agency,” he says.

The collaborators achieved major success on two fronts: the Count System Initiatives, which set out how examiners get credit for the work they do, and the Examiner Performance Appraisal system, the latter just put into place in October.

Labor and management had struggled over the appraisal system since it was mandated by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, back in the Carter administration. Their lack of agreement saw them arguing before the Federal Services Impasses Panel, the Federal Labor-Relations Authority, and eventually all the way to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia circuit.

When Focarino and her management team sat down with Budens and his labor team, they ironed out an agreement, ending three decades of disagreement in a matter of months.

Their success attracted the attention of researchers from the Georgetown University McDonough School of Business. Dr. Brooks Holton and his MBA students are working on a case study of the USPTO labor-management achievements.

Focarino’s management goal is to make herself accessible to everyone, holding “town hall” meetings where examiners can share their ideas and the roadblocks they see to agency goals, like reducing the backlog of patent applications.

It’s an area where the agency has faced major criticism. There are more than 1.2 million pending patents, with about 660,000 applications still awaiting first examination. Currently it takes an average of 33 months for a patent application to reach approval, and in some particularly busy areas, even longer. It takes 24 months on average for an inventor to receive a first response to an application. Focarino’s goal is to get that down to 10 months within three years. To that end, the agency is hiring more examiners and attempting to keep attrition levels low.

Focarino is also trying another approach: fun. On the door of her office hangs a poster for the Tour de Copa, a race-like competition to encourage employees to cut down the backlog.

Focarino uses modern technology to increase efficiency and transparency at the agency. Training programs for examiners can be accessed online as can a dashboard of agency statistics, all information available instantly to the user community — inventors, patent attorneys and the like.

She spends her days in face-to-face meetings with her own senior staff members. She also meets with staffers from Capitol Hill, heads of other agencies and her counterparts in other countries as they seek to codify intellectual property laws around the world.

“She goes beyond managing, she is a leader,” Budens says of Focarino. Morale is higher and employees are working in a less stressful environment than in times past.

Out of 260 federal agencies, the Patent Office ranked as the 19th best place to work. “My goal is to make us No. 1,” Focarino says.

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Fascination with physics

Focarino credits her high school physics teacher, Mike Goldych, with sparking her love of the subject. He was a brand new teacher when she entered Oswego High School. “He really knew how to connect with the students and I fell in love with the subject because of his ability to explain it,” she recalls.

At SUNY Oswego, Dr. John O’Dwyer became a big influence on Focarino with his “wonderful, fatherly way” of leading the tiny physics department and its eight majors. Physics Professor Dale Zych and Professors Emeriti Ram Chaudari and Paul Liebenauer were new to the faculty and made a positive impression on the department’s only female student.

Now she hopes to instill a love of science and technology in the next generation, lest America find itself “woefully behind the rest of the world.”

“Kids idolize sports figures. We need to get them to idolize people who invent things and entrepreneurs,” she says. “The history of our country is built on invention, innovation — we have to keep that going.”

She points to a photo of President Barack Obama signing the America Invents Act in September at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology. The bill will give the USPTO the funding it needs to hire more examiners to trim the backlog of patent applications and is the biggest legislation to affect invention and innovation since the Patent Act of 1952.

Where the new law and the new commissioner’s vision will take the agency and the U. S. economy remains to be seen. There’s no telescope that can bring the future into clear focus. At least, one hasn’t been invented …yet.

This is your day . . . on patents

We all have routines — a list of things we go through on a daily basis without even thinking twice. Most of us don’t think about just how many of those “things” are patented. So, here’s your basic daily schedule, patents and all.

We wake up at 5 a.m. thanks to the alarm clock (Patent No. 8036067). Groggy, we roll over and hit the snooze button (No. 7836400). We then head to the bathroom (No. 2108575), turn on the shower (No. 8113442) and brush our teeth (No. 8079106) while the water heats up. We use the shampoo (No. 8114391), and the body wash (No. 8105994), before grabbing the towel (No. 4177171) to dry off with.

We head to our bedroom (No. 2229608) to get dressed in some jeans (No. 139121) and grab our shoes (No. D653024). We’re hungry, so we run to the refrigerator (No. D654098) and grab a yogurt (No. D547588) and a spoon (No. 3967376) to go.

We hit the remote starter (No. 2836732), and the car (No. RE43178) warms up while we turn on the coffee maker (No. 4406217). We grab the milk (No. 225900) and sugar (No. 95496), adding them to a mug (No. D480603). Pouring the coffee (No. 569575), we then head out the front door (No. D238269).

We quickly pull out our iPhone (No. D466889) to call the office (No. 1040748) and let them know we’re running late. It’s a gorgeous day, so out come the sunglasses (No. D653278) and up goes the volume on the radio (No. D438529).

As we pull into the parking garage (No. 11721841) and find an awesome spot (No. 7834778), we realize we forgot to make a salad (No. 2524638). We make a deal with ourselves that we’ll start our diet (No. 7500937) tomorrow, and order a pizza (No. D395937) today.

We glance in the car mirror (No. 2126059) before heading inside. We double-hit the auto locks (No. 5107691) as we walk. We smile at our boss, reaching in our pocket (No. 10984136) and turning the phone on silent mode (No. 20110248863). We sit down at our desk (No. 1565246), do a few spins in the chair (No. 7946972), and prepare for a usual workday, turning on the computer screen (No. D401231).

Now, that was the morning of a usual day. We bet that you didn’t notice how many patented items you touch on a daily basis. So, next time you grab for a yogurt, brush your teeth, or even place your phone on silent, remember that someone somewhere patented what you just touched.

— Emily Longeretta ’12
Source: google.com/patents
Todd Pagano ’96 isn’t trying to win awards.

The Oswego chemistry graduate is focused on doing high-level research in florescence spectroscopy that can help predict the formation of dangerous carcinogens in drinking water and map cancer-causing chemicals in cigarette smoke as a member of the Rochester Institute of Technology faculty.

He’s devoted to teaching deaf students at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at RIT, opening for them a new world of scientific inquiry and careers in that promising field.

He’s dedicated to advocating for undergraduate research, acquiring grants to help RIT students conduct research alongside faculty members, as well as publishing and presenting his case for hands-on learning.

He’s not trying to win recognition. Yet the awards just keep coming.

Last fall, Pagano was elected a fellow of the American Chemical Society, an honor reserved for the top one percent of society membership. He was one of only 213 awardees nationwide, recognized for accomplishments in chemistry and service to the ACS.

Last month, he traveled to San Diego to give the keynote address at the national meeting of the American Chemical Society. His former mentor, Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus of Chemistry Raymond O’Donnell was at the black-tie affair to see his former student honored with an ACS national award supported by Dreyfus Foundation. That honor came with $15,000 to use in a way that can further the research and teaching he was cited for. It was a proud moment for O’Donnell, who started the student ACS chapter at Oswego.

In February, Pagano won NTID’s top award for research.

In 2005, he received the Richard and Virginia Eisenhart Provost’s Award for Excellence in Teaching from RIT, and in 2008, the Stanley C. Israel Northeast Regional Award for Advancing Diversity in the Chemical Sciences from ACS.

“I’m on a bit of a hot streak,” admits the dedicated scientist, who would rather be sporting a lab coat than a tuxedo.

Pagano knew he wanted to be in academe ever since his undergraduate years at Oswego. He came to the college from his hometown of Rochester, following in the footsteps of his father, Carmen Pagano ’62. His love of the classroom is something he inherited from his father, a former school principal, and his mother, Eleanor, who was a longtime teacher.

So Pagano accelerated his Oswego degree, graduating in just three years, and enrolled at Tufts University in a doctoral program.

How he landed in front of a classroom of deaf students was a bit of serendipity. When Pagano was finishing up his doctorate someone sent him an advertisement for the teaching position.

“I was shocked at how I met all the requirements. It seemed like the position was written for me,” he said — with one important exception. At the bottom of the list it read, “Must learn sign language.”

It was an opportunity to come home — his family was still in Rochester — and to fulfill his dream of a college

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Carcamo came to NTID hoping to earn an associate’s degree. Thanks to Pagano’s mentoring, she not only earned a bachelor’s degree, she is enrolled in a master’s program. She is learning about science, but also about America. As part of her research experience with Pagano, she has traveled to California and Salt Lake City to present their findings.

ROOTS AT OSWEGO

Pagano learned a lot about how to be an effective teacher at Oswego, he says. Four faculty members especially inspired him. O’Donnell “opened my eyes to what it meant to be a member of the profession,” he said. O’Donnell took him to his first professional meeting of the ACS. “Every morning I drink my coffee out of the mug I got there,” Pagano said.

Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus Kenneth Hyde was Pagano’s advisor and also taught him the introductory chemistry course. “At other institutions, it is a gatekeeper course. Students
Pagano said, “Professor Hyde really cares about his students and teaches it well — he turns them on. In my case, he confirmed for me that I wanted to major in chemistry,” he remembered.

Professor Joseph LeFevre influenced Pagano’s classroom style. He remembered that LeFevre told his students on the first day of class that three things were important to him: God, his family and the students. “He didn’t only say it, he acted in a way that showed he really cared,” said Pagano. “The care he gave his students is something I try to emulate in my class.”

Professor Jeffery Schneider was a new faculty member when Pagano enrolled. “He liked football and I did too,” Pagano said, “He really related to the students. He showed me I could still be who I am — still like football and interact with students in that way.” Schneider is an environmental chemist and his focus also influenced the choice of Pagano’s research subjects.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Today Pagano studies how excessive amounts of dissolved organic carbon in drinking water supplies — potentially caused by climate change — when treated with chlorine can produce carcinogenic compounds. In cases of high dissolved organic carbon, water would have to go through costly pretreatment procedures before it can be treated with chlorine. It could be a big problem for Third World countries. Pagano is working on an algorithm to predict the probability of a water supply’s potential to form the dangerous chemicals.

Pagano is also working on a project that is related to lung cancer. Collaborating with bio-engineers who developed a biochemical lung, he studies where different carcinogenic chemicals are deposited in the lungs from the smoking process. He has also recently gotten involved in the study of electronic cigarettes, claimed to be healthier, analyzing them to see if their claims are true and if they are indeed safer. (Since there is no tobacco and no combustion, which together form many of the cancer-causing compounds, these claims may be, in part, true.)

Finally, his pedagogical research on the scholarship of teaching and education — how to make chemistry courses more desirable, how to teach chemistry to deaf and hard-of-hearing populations, and how to conduct undergraduate research — is beginning to gain him recognition. He is the co-editor of the Journal of Science Education for Students with Disabilities and has been invited to present his findings at scientific meetings around the country.

His philosophy of teaching is one of which his Oswego mentors and college founder Edward Austin Sheldon would likely approve.

“The classroom should be student-centered,” Pagano said. “Give them lifelong learning skills — how to be productive learners unto themselves in the future.”

His goal is to break down the science phobia many students have. “If I go into a middle school, students are so passionate about science. There’s so much enthusiasm, so much magic in the field of science,” he said. “It’s a tragedy they lose it in high school or early courses in college. We need to keep students aware of the wonder of science.”

That wonder of science, as evidenced in his research and teaching, is the greatest award Pagano could ever receive.
The stories are out there: in Brooklyn, in Atlanta, in San Francisco, in Mesilla, N.M., and in tiny Upstate New York towns like Rensselaer Falls.

Jasmyn Belcher ’06 believes that everyone anywhere has a story to tell. It’s just a matter of finding them.

“It’s really about listening. A lot of people just want to be heard,” she says.

As one of three producers for StoryCorps — a nationwide nonprofit oral history project — Belcher combs through some of the 40,000 archived interviews and also seeks out undiscovered stories hiding in hamlets, villages, towns and cities coast to coast.

Since 2003, some 60,000 Americans of all ages and walks of life have shared their stories in StoryCorps’ two traveling booths or at studios in Manhattan, Atlanta and San Francisco. Some recordings become two-minute segments featured Fridays on National Public Radio. All of them reside in the Library of Congress’ national archives.

Many volunteer to share their stories at the stationary sites or traveling booths that stop in communities across the country, but others start with Belcher and her colleagues.

She might start with a theme inspired by the calendar — Christmas or Black History Month, for instance — or a current event/hot topic and begin scouring the archives. Stories also surface in daily newspapers or suggestions of participants.

Belcher contacts these potential storytellers in advance to gauge their proclivity to participate.

A former reporter and producer for WRVO-FM, the NPR affiliate on campus where she earned upward of 40 awards over her three and a half years on staff, Belcher says she has made a satisfying transition from facts to feelings.

Each quarter, former WRVO staffer Jasmyn Belcher ’06 produces a month’s worth of weekly segments for broadcast on National Public Radio’s “Weekend Edition.” The job requires hours of listening to StoryCorps archives and traveling to find new stories in communities across America.

PRESERVING PERSONAL PASTS — One Story at a Time

BY SHANE M. LIEBLER
“As a reporter, I was always seeking the truth, and now I feel like I’m helping everyday people find their own truth,” she says. “Participants come into our booth knowing this is a safe space where they can share their most intimate feelings and memories.

“It’s really an opportunity to leave a legacy,” she says.

Growing up outside of Rochester, Belcher was an inquisitive kid “always asking questions.” Interviewing came naturally to her, and the discovery of journalism in college and the “intense” instruction of mentor Ron Graeff made broadcast her professional pursuit.

“I learned so much about the world and my community just by thinking like a journalist,” says Belcher, who enrolled at Oswego looking to study zoology. “I always had an interest in sitting down with people and recording their stories.”

She co-produced the “Stories to Tell” series with fellow alumna Kate DeForest Percival ’96 and Mark Lavonier while at WRVO. Her true inspiration for the StoryCorps career, though, was grandma.

Shortly after Belcher’s grandfather passed away, she joined her grandmother on a personal pilgrimage to Rensselaer Falls in New York’s North Country. Belcher asked questions as her grandmother pointed out landmarks like the place she met her husband and the roller skating rink the couple once frequented.

Then she listened.

“I was used to talking to congressmen and pressing them to get the story,” Belcher recalls. “That was my first experience interviewing someone I was very close to. It was so honest and raw — I wanted to take extra care of her words.”

The same sentiment applies to her current work preserving the American experience one interview at a time.

“They trust us … I want to do right by these people. These are their memories,” Belcher says. “It’s extremely fulfilling and very meaningful.”

Try this at home …

Keep an oral record of your family history with your own recordings. Find a grandparent, parent or sibling and try these StoryCorps-recommended conversation starters:

- What was the happiest moment of your life?
- What are you most proud of?
- What are the most important lessons you’ve learned in life?
- What is your earliest memory?
- How would you like to be remembered?

Learn more about recording and sharing your special memories at storycorps.org/record-your-story

Hear some of Jasmyne’s interviews at oswego.edu/magazine/storycorps
By Shane M. Liebler

Rafael G. “Jova” Rodriguez ’98 insists he’s no hero.

When 7 World Trade Center collapsed near him Sept. 11, 2001, the then-patrolman admits he was running for his life with everyone else.

When he helped remove frightened bystanders from buildings near the Twin Towers that day and worked long hours in the weeks after the terrorist attacks, Rodriguez says he was just doing what any police officer would.

Law enforcement is about helping people, Rodriguez says, whether removing criminals from the streets as he did while a New York Police Department beat cop or helping convict terrorists as he does today.

Now a special agent with the U.S. government, Rodriguez is on the forefront of a federal fight against international narcoterrorism. The drugs that corrupt communities stateside are known to fund terrorist groups like Al Qaeda, Rodriguez says.

While he aspired to become a federal agent for years, 9/11 added urgency to his goal, says Rodriguez, who left the NYPD to conduct federal drug investigations in 2004. For the past two years, he has been on assignment in the Dominican Republic.

“I witnessed 9/11. I was there as one of the first responders,” Rodriguez says. “To see some of these narcoterrorists prosecuted in federal court is really fulfilling.”

Rodriguez and his team assist local military, police and border agents who bust drug-toting boats and planes at Dominican points of entry. The agents are there to observe and advise the authorities on evidence collection and proper procedure so the U.S. government can build solid cases against suspected terrorists.

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Protecting Borders:

Former
NYPD
Cop
Now
Nabs
Terrorists
“I’ve been in law enforcement for 14 years and the last two and a half years I’ve been here — it’s been a real eye-opener,” Rodriguez says. “It’s a whole different monster when you’re dealing with drugs.”

The link between drugs and violence is clear. Rodriguez is often appalled by the crimes drugs influence and his can be a dangerous job.

Linking drugs to terrorism is more difficult. Investigations can take months. Terrorists do their best to hide drug money and muddy the link between themselves and seized shipments.

Typically, local authorities will make a bust at a port of entry, make arrests and take care of evidence. Rodriguez and his team are there to assist in investigations by local authorities and obtain evidence and information.

Rodriguez is a liaison from the U.S. Attorney’s or Homeland Security offices and briefs them on his findings.

Rodriguez says he feels good when thousands of kilograms of narcotics are taken out of circulation, but the real satisfaction comes from taking down terrorists at the source.

Rodriguez, who had dreamed of becoming a cop since his childhood in Manhattan, took his police exam in high school at 16. By the time he reached Oswego, he was angling to become a federal agent and majored in Spanish with the knowledge that drug activity at the time was strongest in Columbia.

He enrolled in the police academy within a few weeks of graduation from Oswego and for five years served on the force in his hometown. He made the leap to federal drug investigations in 2004, handling cases in the New York area.

Rodriguez says Oswego gave him the strong foundation he needed to keep advancing in his field.

“I had great study habits,” he says. Part of pledging for Alpha Phi Alpha was logging long hours in Penfield Library. That discipline proved crucial in his career.

“In these academies, if you fall below a certain grade, you get fired,” Rodriguez said. He has made the grade every time.

At Oswego, he also made lifelong friendships while attending school with sister Thaina Gonzalez ’93 and cousin Diana Miranda ’97.

“I hold Oswego very dear to my heart,” says Rodriguez, who plans to attend the Return to Oz IV reunion for alumni of color this September.

In the meantime, he’ll continue his six-year assignment in the Dominican Republic, investigating and dealing with associates of very dangerous people.

He downplays the risk of working amidst enemies of the state who are moving millions of dollars’ worth of drugs to fund clandestine terrorist operations worldwide.

“I’ve enjoyed it,” he says of his work so far.

By definition, a hero demonstrates strength and courage. A hero looks out for others. A hero gets the bad guys. Maybe Rodriguez is right — he and his peers in law enforcement are “just” doing their jobs. But, whether patrolling boroughs or protecting borders, these are jobs for heroes.
ON THE SEVENTH floor of an aging West 52nd Street building, on folding tables, corkboards and floors, they are creating.

On Craigslist and eBay, with items from prop shops and pickers, they are setting the scene.

On a laptop, at the fabric store, in discussions that float around this corner of the cavernous floor, they are building a character.

Meet the award-winning set decorator Debra Schutt ’77 and her team. This is the behind-the-scenes cast of the aspiring HBO series “The Corrections.”

It’s a cast that won’t be talked about in the Hollywood rags or blogs, but their work is just as important to the success of the show.

Panning a rectangle of folding tables with laptops and coffee cups: Val is on the phone haggling over test tubes, Sammy is researching science projects as if they are on display in 1968 and Fanny is scouring the Internet for samples of erotic art.

Tina is managing the cash for the operation, Karen is mulling over set specs; and the production designer, David, is voting finds, samples and ideas up or down between conversations and conversations and conversations and conversations.

Debra Schutt ‘77 won an Emmy in 2011 for her work on the “Boardwalk Empire” pilot episode. Here, she recalls what went into the set decoration for these three scenes.

“The first and last photos are scenes from the Lolly’s Casino. When I took the job I was very worried about where I was going to find the period tables. Luckily, I walked into an antiques shop in southern New Jersey called the Red Barn and there was the roulette table and it was from Atlantic City.

“The middle photo is of Chalky White [is] on a set built at Steiner Studios in Brooklyn. The floor is painted marble and the fireplace, etc. is scenery.”

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A PARTIAL LISTING OF FILMS FEATURING SET DECORATION BY DEBRA SCHUTT ’77

The Change-Up (2011)  
Boardwalk Empire (2010) *  
Revolutionary Road (2008) **  
I Ghost Town (2008)  
Margot at the Wedding (2006)  
Rent (2005)  
Elf (2003)  
The Human Stain (2003)  
Anger Management (2003)  
Spider-Man (2002)  
The Stepford Wives (2002)  
Changing Lanes (2001)  
28 Days (1999)  
Sleepy Hollow (1999)  
Cradle Will Rock (1998)  
The Horse Whisperer (1998)  
A Perfect Murder (1997)  
Lolita (1997)  
Picture Perfect (1996)  
Bed of Roses (1995)  
Boys on the Side (1995)  
Clockers (1994)  
The Paper (1993)  
A Bronx Tale (1993)  
Last Action Hero (1993)  
The Saint of Fort Washington (1991)  
Fried Green Tomatoes (1991)  
Pacific Heights (1990)  
The Boyfriend School (1990)  
Navy Seals (1988)  
Seven Minutes in Heaven (1985)  

* Won Emmy for “Outstanding Art Direction”  
** Nominated for “Best Art Direction” Academy Award

SOURCE: imdb.com

Above, Debra Schutt ’77 poses with her Emmy award for “Outstanding Art Direction” that she won in 2011. At right, the Brooklyn “Boardwalk Empire” set overlooks the New York City skyline.
emails with the show’s directors and producers.

And then there’s Debra, whose desk is nearly eclipsed by stacks of carpet, fabric, wallpaper and linoleum samples.

A poster board full of old family photos rests on the edge of her wobbly Ikea table. It’s a collection provided by Jonathan Franzen, the author of the book that inspired the show.

A rectangle of black foam core board on the wall behind Debra is labeled “Chip’s apartment” and has a sketch of a bright red chaise belonging to one of the main characters.

That bright red chaise is currently orange and sitting in a nearby room with a collection of other furnishings found on the Web or from middleman “pickers” who comb estate sales, storage lockers and the like for various objects.

“Lipstick red,” Debra says to herself while thumbing through some samples of upholstery fabric. She calls over to David for a second opinion.

Later, Schutt will visit the fabric store in search of the specific color as well as a pattern that would fit with a couch in a suburban living room in the late 1990s, when the book takes place.

To create “The Corrections,” the set will need the right red, the most accurate fabric, the top props. Every conceivable detail down to how shiny the basement floor will be is mulled at this stage.

But, wait. Even in the age of high definition, who’s looking at this stuff?

“If you don’t notice, it means we did our job,” chimes Fanny.

Schutt slaps down a slab of 1960s basement-looking linoleum to gauge its authenticity.

— Jon Vermilye ‘66

Go shopping with Debra at oswego.edu/magazine/schutt

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“Debra was one of our exceptional students. A very dependable and resourceful prop master, if she was doing the show, you were assured that the job would get done and the quality would be excellent.”
“You don’t want people to notice,” she says in agreement without looking up. “You just want it to be right.”

For more than 30 years, Schutt has been doing it right as a set decorator, with a résumé that includes an Oscar nomination for “Revolutionary Road,” an Emmy win for the pilot of HBO’s “Boardwalk Empire” and memorable sets from films like “Fried Green Tomatoes” and “A Bronx Tale.”

Schutt sees herself in the role of building a character.

All the furniture, flooring, drapery, wall coverings and appliances you see on the screen come from the minds, phone calls and clicks of the set decorator and her team. It takes months of long days to make a movie — or in this case, a pilot episode for a television show.

This pilot will determine whether HBO adds “The Corrections” to its stable of award-winning cinematic series.

At the heart of the plot for “The Corrections,” three 30-something siblings gather with their parents for one last Christmas in their childhood home. Reminiscing ensues.

That’s why Sammy needs to perfect a set of 1960s science projects and Schutt is inspecting a piece of wood to determine whether it will match the grain and thickness of the folding table a project like that would sit on in 1968.

Val needs those test tubes to finish off an amateur laboratory in the basement of the “Corrections” house and Fanny needs the racy artwork to cover the main character’s wall for a scene.

“I love the picture that develops,” Debra says. “I love that I get the opportunity to create these visuals.

“There’s never a ‘no.’ You can do anything,” she says.

Her career in set curating has firm roots in Oswego, where she was a member of Pi Delta Chi and earned a degree in education. As an upper-classman, she was drawn to the technical side of theatre and found mentors in department staff like Ken Stone ’68 and Jon Vermilye ’66.

“Debra was one of our exceptional students,” Vermilye remembers. “A very dependable and resourceful prop master, if she was doing the show, you were assured that the job would get done and the quality would be excellent.”

Her experience in Waterman Theatre, and her friend Alice Maguire ’76, helped Schutt get her first professional gigs in theater. She made the transition to film in the mid-1980s as a set decorator, a title she’s maintained her entire career.

Like many jobs in the film industry, it’s a tough gig. There are the long hours and logistical challenges that come with each project — Debra routinely works 12-hour days and once had to scramble for office desk tchotchkes at 7 a.m. . . . 30 minutes before shooting.

Job security is determined by skill. The work comes project to project, typically through networking.

Even if “The Corrections” is picked up and becomes a series, Debra may not be its set decorator for the duration. The “Boardwalk Empire” pilot was a one-off job as well.

She continues to do movies — the much-buzzed-about Sacha Baron Cohen film “The Dictator” is one recent project.

Perhaps the greatest influence on her career, though, is her apple farm upbringing outside of Rochester. The long days at her family-owned and -operated Schutt’s Apple Mill gave her the frame of mind to make it on a film crew.

“I am a worker,” she says. “I will just sink my teeth in and work until I drop … I’m obsessed.”

Most of that work goes unnoticed, but that’s the point. If the fixtures, fabrics and furnishings are spot on, you’re watching the movie.

Debra Schutt ’77 was nominated for an Oscar in 2009 for her work on “Revolutionary Road” starring Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio. Here, she recalls what went into the set decoration in these scenes.

“The director, Sam Mendes, wanted a pair of matching 5-foot sofas for the living room. We finally had them made new but when they arrived they were over-stuffed, so we had to have an upholsterer unstuff the pair the day before we shot the scene.

“In the kitchen scene, there were five chairs in the set. At one point in the film, Leonardo breaks a chair and we had only one extra. The construction department made several extras out of balsa wood but luckily Leonardo did it in one take using the one extra real chair.”
Stay on Campus for Harborfest

ALUMNI CAN STAY ON CAMPUS for one of Central New York's premier summer events. On-campus housing will be available for alumni who wish to relive their favorite Oswego memories by attending the 25th anniversary edition of Harborfest, July 26 to 29.

Alumni will be housed in Hart Hall according to class year, with a maximum of two adults per room. Alumni may begin checking in Thursday, July 26, at 2 p.m. and must check out by Sunday, July 29, at 11 a.m.

There is an early bird special of $60 per night for those making reservations on or before July 16 by 4 p.m. Reservations made after 4 p.m. July 16 will be $65 per night. For those registering by July 16, refrigerators will be available upon request for an additional $10 for the weekend. Mattresses for children 16 years and younger will also be available to rent for $10 for the weekend. Linens for beds and towels will be supplied. The Centro bus will be running a convenient shuttle service from campus to the festival grounds.

Don't miss the opportunity to attend this exciting Oswego tradition!

To make reservations contact Allison Craine at allison.craine@oswego.edu or visit oswego.edu/alumni/harborfest.

To register for Harborfest Housing you will need to register for OsweGoConnect. Your unique security code to enter the community is the 9-digit ID number is located above your address on the mailing label of this magazine. You will only need this the first time you enter and then you will choose your own personal password.
The Oswego Alumni Association inducted four former Oswego student athletes and one coach emeritus into the Athletic Hall of Fame Nov. 12 in the Hewitt Union Ballroom. Pictured from left, are: soccer Coach Emeritus Ken Peterson, three-sport star Charles Stanek ’65, lacrosse standout Ken Walker ’80, and wrestler Harold Furrer ’65. The Oswego Alumni Association also recognized field and ice hockey player Diane Gilligan ’85, who was unable to attend the ceremony.

OSWEGO’S NEW MAYOR HAS witnessed the city through the decades as a native son, college student and professional. Now Tom Gillen ’72 is eager to help move it into a new age.

Gillen won the Nov. 8 mayoral election 2,426 to 1,234, a margin of 2 to 1, against opponent William D. “Dave” White ’92.

“It’s a thrill and honor to be the mayor of this community,” Gillen said. “I’m happy that I can play a part in helping this community grow into the 21st century.”

Gillen grew up in Oswego and attended Oswego State in the 1960s, when the college experienced unprecedented growth.

Coming from a small community, Gillen believed that he held limited views until attending college.

“It opened my eyes to a lot of different people and ideas,” Gillen said.

Gillen graduated with an English degree and earned his teaching certificate, but instead went into sales and marketing, working for companies like AT&T and Apple. He left Oswego for a short period of time, but returned after the birth of his first daughter.

“I wanted my children to grow up like I did, in a traditional small city upbringing,” Gillen said.

After retiring, Gillen made the decision to run for mayor. He took office in January and will serve a four-year term.

— Erin Marulli ’13
Alumni Bookshelf

This column celebrates the publishing success of Oswego alumni authors, illustrators and recording artists. Please keep us informed about new books and audio recordings by requesting that your publisher or distributor send a copy for the Oswego Alumni Bookshelf at King Alumni Hall.

Joseph Boskin ’51 is back again with the “comical journey” of Corporal Boskin’s Cold Cold War, which takes the readers through the adventure of Corporal Boskin’s challenges during the war. With a sense of humor, this book provides a look into the fictitious Transportation Arctic Group on a journey in Greenland. Syracuse University Press, 2011.

John Vaszko ’64 continues his mystery novel writing with his second book, The Reunion, a novel about Bob Harkins who is anxious and nervous about returning home to New York for his 40th high school reunion. However, when a former classmate is found dead, Harkins finds himself trying to solve the murder. Sir Speed Printing, 2011.

Donna Matteson ’83 M ’88 joins Deborah Kennedy and Stuart Baur in writing Civil Engineering & Architecture, a college preparation textbook that focuses on a successful career in science, technology, engineering, and math, or STEM. The text uses architectural styles and illustrations that are used in today’s college classrooms. Delmar, Cengage Learning, 2012.

David M. Marshall ’92, M ’99, Brett Handley ’97, and Craig Coon ’01 worked together to write the textbook Principles of Engineering. With explanations of mathematics, engineering concepts, and scientific principles, the text is of great help to any non-calculus engineering course. Delmar, Cengage Learning, 2012.


Professor Emeritus Lewis Putnam Turco adds a companion to his previous books The Book of Literary Terms and The Book of Dialogue with his newly revised version of The Book of Forms. This edition shows the crafts of poetry and adding in new forms and examples by young and old contemporary poets. University Press of New England, 2012.
Sounds of Success

HOW DOES A TONY SOUND? Pretty good to Brian Ronan '84, who earned his first for the Broadway hit “The Book of Mormon” in the “Best Sound Design in a Musical” category at the Tony Awards in June.

“The Tony for sound design is relatively new and it’s a real honor to be singled out among so many talented designers,” he said. “In my formative years following my time at Oswego, I was inspired by many great designers prior to Tony eligibility, one of whom is Oswego graduate Tom Morse ’74. [He] is one of the designers who really pulled Broadway sound into the 21st century.”

Some of Ronan's most valuable collegiate experience came from his time with Campus Lighting, an independent, student-run entity that gave him a feel for the business side of performance. He then made some of his first Broadway connections as an intern at Masque Sound.

“I think every show has a voice of its own,” Ronan said previously, “Part of my job is to find that sound and bring it forward to the audience.”

Ronan considers a Broadway house “just an empty room” until sound and light crews enhance it. He and his crew set up the sound and communications systems for each performance: everything from the mixing board to the backstage headsets.

Current projects include “Anything Goes” on Broadway and “Rent” off-Broadway as well as “American Idiot” and “Bring It On,” both touring nationally. He is also working on “Nice Work if You Can Get It,” starring Matthew Broderick and a musical adaption of the novel Giant. — Shane M. Liebler

Return to Good Times, Return to Oz Reunion

IT’S BACK! Mark Sept. 28 – 30, 2012, on your calendars for Return to Oz Reunion IV!

A special dinner and ball, a concert by the Gospel Choir and a picnic at Fallbrook are some of the exciting events that are planned for this fall’s reunion.

Don’t miss out! Follow the Yellow Brick Road to Oz this September.

For the most up-to-date information on Return to Oz IV, check out the website at www.oswego.edu/returntooz.
Wellness Warriors Walk for Women

NUMBERS MEAN A LOT to Patti Fennessy Novy ’89. She has 0 tolerance for breast cancer, which claimed the life of 1 sister-in-law and struck 3 close friends. She would do anything so her 2 daughters don’t have to face the disease.

But the numbers she is proudest of add up to one huge accomplishment — 320 miles walked by Patti and 500 miles by Noreen Moloney ’90 and more than $500,000 raised for breast cancer research.

The Alpha Sigma Chi sisters have led a team in the New York City Avon Breast Cancer Walk since 2004, the year after the disease claimed the life of Michele, the sister of Patti’s husband, David Novy ’89.

Little by little, their team — the Wellness Warriors — grew in numbers and fundraising prowess. At the October 2011 walk, they passed a landmark. Their eight-year team total is $582,824. They placed third for fundraising the last two years, out of more than 300 teams.

Patti and Noreen are proudest that their team, which numbers between 30 and 40 walkers each year, raised their money without any corporate sponsorships. They work all year to accomplish their goal, with fundraisers at a local bowling alley, a Super Bowl pool, a comedy show and a bartending night at a local establishment.

When walk weekend comes each fall, they join 4,000 other participants for a two-day 40-mile trek through New York City.

“We walk because we can,” says Patti.

“A lot of people can’t.”

“A walk is easy compared to what a cancer patient has to go through,” says Noreen, whose mother is a breast cancer survivor. “It’s my way of giving back and helping others — just a chance to make a difference.”

The friends realize that finding the cure to one cancer is the key to curing all cancers. And having reached a half-million dollar milestone, Patti has another goal. “I don’t want to walk forever,” she says. “I would love it if I never had to do again, because that would mean we have a cure.”

— Michele Reed
Award-winning ‘Mathster’ Makes Math Matter

IN AN AGE WHERE CHILDREN ARE USED to watching TV and movies and playing video games, math teacher Tom Vakkas ’98 subtracts the textbooks and worksheets and adds in videos and toys.

Tom, a fourth-grade math teacher at Parker Elementary School in Cortland, has used conventional, paper-based methods during his 13-year career. “Kids get it, but not all kids,” he said. Now, starring as “Mathster Vakkas” in his homemade videos, he tries to get students to solve problems using real-life situations.

“I’ll do something like, ‘Hey kids, it’s Mathster Vakkas. I’m here trying to buy a Gatorade and a granola bar. The Gatorade is $2.30 and the granola bar is 85 cents. How much am I going to spend in total and if I pay with $5 how much change am I going to get back?’” said Tom. “[It’s] just real life stuff, instead of textbook stuff.”

His creative approach earned Tom a second-place award in the PBS Teacher Innovation Award contest in 2011 for using PBS resources and innovative ideas that emphasize 21st century learning skills. Only 40 teachers nationwide were honored. He credits his success to his outgoing personality, technology, his own children and his toys.

Tom’s videos use snow forts, pets, games and sports to teach math. He also creates “video stories” that integrate questions into a presentation incorporating English, math and patterns.

“At the spots where I ask questions, you’ll hear kids answering out loud,” Vakkas said of his video stories. “It’s so cool.”

Tom’s time at Oswego played a role in his current career. “Oswego was where my heart was, it changed my life,” he said. “It woke me up and gave me a good education.”

He credits Dr. Ronald Brown, emeritus professor of physics, for opening his eyes to using toys and entertainment to teach.

Tom is continuing on with Mathster Vakkas Productions with new tutorials and video clips on many topics and math subjects at mathster-vakkas.com.

— Erin Marulli ’13

Watch a Mathster Vakkas video at oswego.edu/magazine/mathster
WHEN ANY OF US LOOK BACK, our life is really a series of transitions. Like me, some of your big life transitions may have included going away to college, getting married, having kids, losing a parent, becoming an empty-nester... as well as the transitions throughout our professional careers.

For me professionally, I started what sounded like an interesting part-time job, along with my colleague, Lisa Potter, back in October 1984 in the Alumni Office at SUNY Oswego. Little did I have any idea then that it would become my life’s work, my passion, my joy. Over those 27-plus years, you and I have had many great adventures together, built wonderful alumni programs, maybe become Facebook friends or met in person. It is safe to say I have met thousands of alumni in person — and become friends with many of you — over these last three decades.

So now comes another transition in my life. And, no, I am not leaving SUNY Oswego! Rather as associate vice president of alumni relations and stewardship, I will have an opportunity to develop programs and communications, working with our scholarship donors and other major supporters of programs and initiatives at SUNY Oswego.

And while our alumni program — still my love and passion — will still come under my oversight, a new alumni director will direct all of our “on-the-ground” alumni programs, such as reunions, student/alumni career networking programs, regional programs, social networking outreach and much, much more.

Michael Sgro joins us with a wealth of experience in alumni relations as well as a breadth of experience in social networking and all things web and “online” — and for those of you who know me, you know that is not one of my strengths! (My three kids have just fallen out of their chairs laughing now!) I invite you to learn more about Michael on page 11.

And I know you will all join me in giving him a special warm Oswego welcome when you meet him at Reunion Weekend or at one of our newly rejuvenated regional programs! And I’ll still see all of you at alumni events and work together with you to continue all the things that make Oswego great.

I also hope to see many of you back on campus for our biggest — and most fun — alumni event of the year at Reunion Weekend 2012: June 7 to 10!
Some 17,000-plus have played professional baseball in this country and only 206 of them are in the Hall of Fame. There are more than 200 employees at the Hall; Ryan Pregent '09 is one of them.

“I used to come down every year without fail with my Dad, so it’s kind of cool that I work here now,” says Ryan, an Oswego business major who went to Cortland for his sports management master’s. As membership associate, he cultivates a key source of fundraising. Ryan occasionally gives tours, takes tickets, blogs and runs a movie projector, but often marvels at the history and lore surrounding him.

Best business class: Business Law 350 (I think that was the course number). I had a great professor and it was the one class I always looked forward to.

Worst grade: C-. I can remember the paper, the professor and exactly what I did wrong — it has stuck with me.

Favorite ballplayer: My all-time favorite player is Lou Gehrig. I really enjoy watching Robinson Cano and Roy Halladay for players of today.

Least favorite stat: Earned Run Average is easily eschewed by other factors in the game and fails to tell the whole story.

No. 1 team: The Yankees are my favorite team. I am also a huge Jets fan.

Great Hall of Fame exhibit: The Pride and Passion exhibit. It profiles the Negro leagues. There is a lot jam-packed in a small space and a lot of great interactive opportunities for visitors.

Hardest Hall of Fame job: To be honest, all the jobs have ups and downs and I am not sure there is a hardest job. I guess it all depends on who you talk to.

Easiest meal: Pizza. All you have to do is dial.

Cooperstown hidden gem? Doubleday Field is a throwback to small-town ballparks. It has a beautiful façade and is tucked away off of Main Street. A lot people know it’s here — they just can’t find it.

Top Oswego spot: Greene’s Ale House. Good food and wings was always a must.
Fashion Designing Alumnus Says Yes to Dresses

Elias Gutierrez ’09 works behind the scenes, but his work is hardly hidden.

He designed the collection of dresses adorning the Kathy Hilton showroom, where he works in the Garment District of New York City. He freelances for Kleinfeld Bridal, made famous by TLC’s “Say Yes to the Dress” television series. As an intern, he created the jerseys worn by the big-headed presidential mascots who entertain during Washington Nationals baseball games.

“It’s [all] theatre. It’s something different every day,” says Elias, whose résumé bullet points for designing and creating far outnumber his years of professional experience. “It’s not every day you get to make a giant fruit for a commercial.”

Or the bobblehead likeness of controversial Iran President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad — that one landed him on the cover of the New York Times.

The graphic design major produces a line of dresses bearing the name of actress Kathy Hilton — aka Paris’ mom — in his main gig as associate designer. A costume design minor, Elias cut his teeth cutting cloth in the theatre department.

Today, he dreams up and sketches dress designs inspired by trendy pieces with ultra-expensive price tags out of reach for most.

“It’s not by any means a knockoff,” Elias says. “The goal is to make a luxury item that doesn’t break the bank.”

Elias studies hundreds of photos and hours of footage to come up with a design for, say, a wedding dress based on the threads Kate Middleton wore to her royal nuptials with Prince William.

Those specs are sent to China where cloth mockups called “muslins” are created and mass produced after tweaks.

Elias says his success has firm roots in Oswego’s theatre program, where professors Kitty Macey and Judy McCabe nurtured his talents.

“I had really close relationships with my professors,” he says. “That’s the kind of [program] they’ve set up: The Theatre Department is like a family.”

— Shane M. Liebler
Jessica Arno ’08 and Daniel Smith ’08 were married May 14 at Hickory Ridge Gold and Country Club in Holley. Pictured from left are: Ian Miller ’08; Ashlee Distin; Kristen Corbett ’08, M ’10; Robert Palazzo ’05, M ’08; Edward Smith ’08; the bride and groom; Christian Claps ’07; Heather Weller; Kati Larkin; Rita Torsney-Sullivan ’09; Liz St. Louis ’08; Patrick Baker ’08; Jessica Marin ’09; Carlie Watson ’08; Jessica Montgomery; Sean Erb; Max Gottfried ’09; Robert Delfavero ’09; Nathan Roder ’08; and Samantha Wexler ’08. Daniel is the assistant manager at the Holiday Inn Express and Jessica is the marketing coordinator for Appel Osborne. They reside in Clay.

Candice Berardi ’05 and Tim O’Mealia were married on Aug. 7 at Holy Cross Church in Charlotte, N.Y. Pictured is the wedding party, including Maid of Honor Melissa Kopac ’04 and bridesmaid Annette Kellogg ’05. Candice is a property and casualty insurance underwriter and Tim is an electrical engineer. The couple resides in Rochester.

Jennifer Bushey ’05 and Adam Fitscher ’05 were married Aug. 13 in Peru, N.Y., and had a reception at Valcour Conference Center. Pictured from left in the back row are: Martin Campbell ’05, Richard Nearpass ’06, Conchetta Gibbons Nearpass ’05 and Kyle Skillins ’06. Pictured in the front row, from left, are the bridegroom, the bride, Kevin Sutherland ’05 and Joselle Parkhurst Iwachiw ’05. Adam owns and operates Those Dirty Dogs, a grooming and kennel service in Cortland, while Jennifer is a senior at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. The two reside in Cortland.

Jessica Arno ’08 and Daniel Smith ’08 were married May 14 at Hickory Ridge Gold and Country Club in Holley. Pictured from left are: Ian Miller ’08; Ashlee Distin; Kristen Corbett ’08, M ’10; Robert Palazzo ’05, M ’08; Edward Smith ’08; the bride and groom; Christian Claps ’07; Heather Weller; Kati Larkin; Rita Torsney-Sullivan ’09; Liz St. Louis ’08; Patrick Baker ’08; Jessica Marin ’09; Carlie Watson ’08; Jessica Montgomery; Sean Erb; Max Gottfried ’09; Robert Delfavero ’09; Nathan Roder ’08; and Samantha Wexler ’08. Daniel is the assistant manager at the Holiday Inn Express and Jessica is the marketing coordinator for Appel Osborne. They reside in Clay.
AnneMarie Bologna '04 and Tys Bailey-Yavonditte were married Sept. 2 in downtown Albany. Pictured back row from left are: Jeffrey O'Shea '03, Rebecca O'Shea '03, Kelly LoVullo '05, Christine Herrman '06, Ayndrea Greenfield '04, Sarah Russ '05, the bride, the bridegroom, Shannon Jaskot '04, Michael Forkin '06, Lyndsay Fox '04, Katie Schreiner '04, Michael Corrado '09 and Walter Jaskot '71. Pictured front row, from left, are: Katie Oswald '03, Rose Grayson '05 and Jessica Titus '06. AnneMarie is a buyer for Regeneron Pharmaceuticals and Tys is a wellness director for the Guilderland YMCA branch. The couple resides in North Greenbush.

Devin Kerr '02 and Dawn Orlandella '09 were married Oct. 8 in Syracuse. The bride and bridegroom are pictured at center. With them, from left, are: Douglas Kerr '02; Casey Crump Anderson '01; Patrick Devendorf '90, M '10; Rebecca Devendorf M '01; Leonard Orlandella '81, M '81, M '02; Heather Kerr VanGostein '98 and Brian Fendt '02. David and Dawn reside in Liverpool.

Marian Elder Eynnor ’34 of Wolcott passed away Jan. 25, 2011. She is survived by two children, a stepson, 10 grandchildren and many great-grandchildren.

Audrey Dickinson Ferris ’39 of Cobleskill passed away Oct. 7, 2010. She taught in various schools in Oswego County, including one-room schoolhouses in North Scriba and Lycoming. She is survived by two sons, three daughters, 11 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Marion Ottman Pohl ’40 of Valley Stream passed away Feb. 8, 2010.

Sarah Jones Stewart ’40 of Naples, Fla., passed away April 5, 2010.

Benjamin Brooks ’41 of Peekskill died July 19, 2007. He served with the U.S. Army during World War II. Benjamin earned a master’s degree from Cornell University in 1947. He taught industrial arts technology at Roosevelt High School in Yonkers.

Thomas Preston ’42 of Delmar passed away Dec. 15, 2009. He served with the U.S. Army during World War II. Tom taught for many years in the Bethlehem Central School District. He is survived by four children, including James ’73, and five grandchildren.

Roy Schoenberg ’47 of Bay Shore died Feb. 23, 2010. He had been a school district administrator and college professor. He is survived by his wife, Ellen; two children; and five grandchildren.

Joseph Braco ’48, Associate Professor Emeritus of Technology, of Oswego died Jan. 7. He served with the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. Joe taught industrial arts technology in the Mohawk Valley area before joining the faculty at Oswego. He retired in 1983. He is survived by four children, Richard ’74, Robert, Ann and Thomas.

Rhoda Schulz Hildebrant ’48 of Toledo, Ohio, passed away March 14, 2011. Rhoda began her career in schools in Central New York. She moved to Toledo in 1949 and spent many years as a teacher and principal in Point Place. She earned a master’s degree at the University of Toledo. She was predeceased by her husband, Robert ’36, who died in 2002.

Alexander Bruni ’49 of San Diego, Calif., passed away May 15, 2010. He is survived by his wife, Ellen ’50.

Dean Darrow ’49 of East Setauket passed away July 8, 2010.

Charles Easterbrook ’49 of Oxford, Miss., passed away July 22. He served with the U.S. Army during World War II. Charles taught industrial arts for 36 years in Elmira Heights. Surviving are his wife, Lucile; two sons; and four granddaughters.

Thomas Stirrat ’50 of Bradenton, Fla., died May 18, 2008. He served with the U.S. Air Force during World War II and the Korean War. He taught industrial arts technology for more than 25 years in the Oyster Bay School District. Surviving are his wife, Patricia; four children; 14 grandchildren; and many great-grandchildren.

Rita Cochran Fichtner ’51 of Rochester passed away July 16. Surviving are her husband, John; two daughters; three sons; and 10 grandchildren.

Lloyd Robinson ’51 of Front Royal, Va., died Feb. 13, 2011. He served with the U.S. Navy during World War II. Lloyd taught industrial arts technology for 30 years at Warren County High School, retiring in 1982. He is survived by his wife, Sonia Prokopchuk ’51; three children; and six grandchildren.

Frank Giunti ’52 of Williamsburg, Va., died Feb. 2, 2011. He earned a master’s degree at Rutgers University. Frank was employed by the Department of Defense for 38 years. For 24 years, he worked with the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict. Keith taught in Central New York and the state of Washington for 30 years. He retired from the Oneida City School District. Surviving are his wife, Marian, and seven siblings, including Shelly Carapeyan ’71.

Richard Miller ’56 of Canton passed away Jan. 6. He earned a bachelor’s degree at Alfred University and a master’s degree at St. Lawrence University. Richard taught at SUNY Canton beginning in 1946 and later served as chair of the electrical technology department. He retired in 1983. Surviving are three daughters and four grandchildren.

Robert Hughes ’57 of Frankfort died April 26, 2010.

Nicholas Gallo ’59 of Port Chester passed away April 1, 2010. Prior to retirement, he taught technology in the Port Chester High School. Nicholas is survived by his wife, Patricia; three daughters; 12 grandchildren; and a great-grandson.

Walter Hill ’59 of Carlisle died March 10, 2011. He taught industrial arts technology for 28 years at Edwards-Knox High School. Walter is survived by his wife, Dorothy; three children and six grandchildren.

Kathleen Skeele Bedell ’62 of Canastota died June 29. She taught for 30 years in the DeRuyter Central School District, retiring in 2007. She is survived by her husband, Robert; two daughters; and five grandchildren.

Richard Perry ’62 of Victor died Nov. 25. He taught industrial arts technology in the Marcellus Central School District for more than 30 years. Dick was a veteran of the U.S. Army. Surviving are his wife, Darlene Terry ’65; two daughters; and two grandchildren.

Daniel Davis ’63 of Boston, Mass., passed away Oct. 19 while on a teaching mission in Udaipur, India. He earned a master’s degree at Brooklyn College and a doctorate at Ohio State University. He was the social studies department chair and principal at Stoughton High School for 30 years. He taught at Boston University for the past eight years. Dan is survived by his wife, Barbara; two children; and four grandchildren.

Dean Swift ’64 of Rochester died Aug. 10. He was a math teacher for 34 years and directed 25 musicals at Gates-Chili High School. Surviving are his wife, Kathy; a daughter; and two grandsons.

John Davis ’65 of Wilson passed away May 25. He is survived by his wife, Linda Scharf ’67.

Donna Capossela Johnson ’65 of Coshocton, Ohio, passed away Oct. 21. She earned her master’s degree at Ohio University. She began her teaching career at the Coshocton County Joint Vocational School District in 1980 and went on to become the assistant principal and principal of Stoughton High School. Donna was named superintendent in 1999 and continued in that capacity until her retirement in 2007. She is survived by three children and eight grandchildren.

John Paxton ’65 of New York City died Nov. 7. Prior to his retirement, he taught in Mount Vernon and was the director of the high school choirs for 10 years. Donations in John’s memory may be made to the John Paxton Memorial Fund, c/o Oswego College Foundation, 219 Sheldon Hall, Oswego, NY 13126.

Kathleen Herrmann Pullman ’65 of Batavia, Ohio, passed away Oct. 28, 2010. She earned a master’s degree at Ohio University. She
taught English, drama, journalism and radio at both the high school and college levels. Kathy is survived by her husband, David; two daughters; and five grandchildren.

Jan West ’65 of Rainbow Lake died Oct. 13. She worked as a chemist at Bristol Labs, then at SUNY ESF in Syracuse.


Mary Ellen Rector ’66 of Mexico passed away March 24, 2011. She taught at Leland and Gray Seminary in Vermont, Mexico Academy and Central School and South Jefferson Central School, retiring in 1981. Mary Ellen is survived by her husband, Laurence; six children, including Noreen Patterson ’75 and James ’74; nine grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

Michael Ovios ’67 of Vineyard Haven, Mass., passed away March 31, 2011. He received his master’s degree from Cambridge College. Michael taught at the Tisbury Elementary School for 35 years. He is survived by his wife, Janice Wood ’65; a son; and three grandsons.

Marjorie Schong ’67 of Poultney died April 6, 2010.

Osborne Gaines ’68 of Hoo-sick Falls passed away Dec. 11, 2010. He served with the U.S. Navy during World War II. He taught industrial arts for many years at Mt. Anthony Junior High School and later worked at the Bennington Pottery. Osborne is survived by his wife, Harriet; a son; five grandchildren; and a great-granddaughter.

John Scolfield ’68 of Fayetteville passed away Oct. 5, 2010. He served with the U.S. Army Reserve from 1967 until his retirement as a master sergeant in 1996. John is survived by his wife, Donna; a daughter; and a son.


Sylvia Conroy Donnelly ’69 of Syracuse passed away Jan. 28, 2011. She is survived by her husband, Robert.

Saverio Mecca ’70 of Kings Park passed away June 21.

Nancy Seale Osborne ’70, Librarian Emeritus, of North Fort Myers, Fla., passed away Oct. 21. She earned a master’s degree at Syracuse University. Nancy joined the Oswego faculty in Penfield Library in 1980 and served in various roles as the art department liaison, head of special collections and coordinator of library instruction. She was also an assistant professor in the women’s studies department. Her work earned her recognition with the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Librarianship. Nancy retired in 1998. She is survived by her partner of more than 40 years, Barbara Gerber, Distinguished Service Professor Emerita; daughter, Jean Ellen Osborne; stepdaughter, Jaime Gerber Baitse ’91; five grandchildren; three step-grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren.

David DeSantis ’72 of Binghamton died July 24. He was director of learning and development at BAE Systems. Previously he was the mathematics department chair in the Vestal Central School District. Dave is survived by his wife, Fran; a son; a daughter; a granddaughter; and three stepsons.

Susan Bury Difazio ’72 of Holtsville died Oct. 23, 2010. She taught in the Sachem School District for 30 years. Susan is survived by her husband, Santo, and two daughters.

Michelene Regan ’72 of Oswego passed away Nov. 11.

Edwin Schroll ’72 of Cape Vincent died Sept. 4, 2008.

Christine Casterton ’73 of Vestal died Mar. 23, 2011.

Maureen Smith Koval ’75 of Lansing, Mich., passed away Oct. 3. Mary Ann earned doctorates in both chemistry and environmental toxicology from Michigan State University. She worked for the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for 15 years and with her husband, John Grant, owned EZ Home Ownership Realty. She is survived by her husband.

Mary Ann Heindorf ’81 of Lansing, Mich., passed away Oct. 30. She is survived by her husband, Harold, and a stepson.


Mary Ellen Rector ’66 of Easton, Conn., died July 7, 2008. Surviving are her husband, George and a son.

Juliet Firlirk Hurley ’80 of The Villages, Fla., passed away Oct. 29. She was a senior case manager coordinator in the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Florida. Juliet is survived by her husband, Harold, and a stepson.

John Sherlock ’80 of Langhorne, Penn., passed away Oct. 21. He earned his master’s degree at Rochester Institute of Technology. John was the design editor at the Philadelphia Daily News for 10 years and was a member of the launch team for USA Today. He is survived by his wife, Karen, and two sons.

Mary Ann Heindorf ’81 of Lansing, Mich., passed away Oct. 3. Mary Ann earned doctorates in both chemistry and environmental toxicology from Michigan State University. She worked for the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for 15 years and with her husband, John Grant, owned EZ Home Ownership Realty. She is survived by her husband.

James Shane ’83 of Georgetown, Mass., died Nov. 24. He received his master’s degree from Fitchburg State College. James taught in the Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational School District for 21 years. He is survived by his wife, Lynn, and a son.

William Borucke ’87 of Southampton died October 21, 2010. He had been a painting contractor for 25 years. Bill is survived by his parents, three brothers and a sister.

Mary Joan McCleery ’92 of Beaver, Penn., died April 1, 2009.


Audrey Otis ’95 of Syracuse passed away Sept. 26. Prior to retiring, Audrey taught in the Syracuse City School District. She is survived by her husband, Edward; two daughters; a son; and four grandchildren.

Mary Hayes ’96 of Dexter passed away Aug. 12, 2010.

Brian Tancredi ’98 of Huntington died May 7. He is survived by his mother and three sisters.

James LeFlore, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, died Jan. 3. He served with the U.S. Army in Hawaii. Jim earned his bachelor’s degree, master’s degree and doctorate in anthropology at Syracuse University. He taught in Oswego’s anthropology department for 33 years, retiring in 2005. He is survived by his wife, Cynthia, of Oswego’s political science and communication studies departments; four daughters; a son; and 14 grandchildren.

Ernest Luongo, Professor Emeritus of Health and Physical Education, died Oct. 2. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II in the Pacific Theater. He received his master’s degree at Cortland and his certificate of advanced study at Syracuse University. Ernie taught and coached baseball, soccer and basketball at Middleburgh Central Schools from 1953 to 1957. He taught at Oswego from 1957 until his retirement in 1985. Ernie coached the men’s varsity soccer team from 1957 to 1966. Surviving are two daughters, a son and five grandchildren. Donations in his memory may be made to the Ernest B. Luongo Memorial Scholarship c/o Oswego College Foundation, 219 Sheldon Hall, Oswego, NY 13126.

Owen Pittenger, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, died Nov. 19. He earned his doctorate at the University of Illinois. Owen taught at Oswego for 35 years. Surviving are his wife, Betty; five children, including Jeannette Kratz ’75; and grandchildren; and great-grandchildren.

William Todd, Professor Emeritus of Technology died Dec. 21, 2011. He served with the U.S. Navy during World War II and spent two years of active duty with the Naval Reserve during the Korean War. He earned his bachelor’s degree at Eastern Kentucky University and his master’s degree at the University of Illinois. He taught industrial arts technology at Oswego for 30 years. Surviving two sons, Gary ’71 and David; daughters Doris, Marcia, Cheryl, Lisa and Susan; 20 grandchildren; and 20 great-grandchildren.
There is no talking for some time. We sit, the sound of John moving around, the buzzing of a space heater in the background.

The television is turned to R News, which is a station that covers news in Rochester twenty-four hours a day. The reports are filled with statistics and there are charts and diagrams and pictures of plows and cars stuck in the snow and of kids building snowmen or skating on the canal.

Dave has a lot to say this year and we listen closely.

Still, none of us leave with a fortune. Or it is not the kind one would expect.

We sit there for hours, Dave moving from us to the men at the other end of the bar sitting with the beautiful Ukrainian woman.

This is our fortune, all of it. The people who are there when you walk in and the charts and graphs on the television. The Christmas lights, some of which have burned out, and the three of us: father and sons, sitting here together for another year. That it is snowing and that we each have one pitcher of beer and that my brother and I will watch our father walk slowly, with a slight limp, back into his apartment complex where he will steadily climb those twenty-two flights.

I will stay in Ohio for five years, am still there, and when I drive home I feel like I am headed in the direction I was meant to move: east. It will always be my bearing. Not west to the new cities and prairies, not north or south to the poles. But east, home.

I think about my father and wonder what the world will do with him. The markers pile up, each one drawing me in and propelling me forward: Cleveland, Erie, the rest stop at Angola, Buffalo.

Then the tollbooths and that last stretch of land, where the sky is gray, a kind of gloom that those who are not from here never grow accustomed to. And finally, the skyline: the smoke stacks of Kodak, the three giant tanks of beer in front of the Genesee Brewery, the smell of trash plates, the smell of river water, the High Falls, the Low Falls, the Eastman house, Lake Ave., Park Ave., and lastly my father’s building towering toward the sky, and him in it, taking those stairs one at a time.

Jon Chopan ’03, a professor at The Ohio State University, recently earned the Creative Writing Alumni Award from Oswego’s Creative Writing Arts program. His first novel, Pulled from the River, was published in March.
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Dr. Ronald A Brown’s teaching philosophy can be summed up in three letters: F-U-N.

When he joined the Oswego faculty in 1971, the physics department was fighting for survival. It had few majors, and needed to attract non-majors to remain viable. With a bachelor’s degree from Drexel University and master’s and doctorate from Purdue, Brown was hired away from Kent State. His mission: to make physics understandable for those fulfilling general education requirements and elementary education majors looking for fun ways to incorporate science into their classrooms. Vowing not to “kill’em with calculus,” he devised his own method of hands-on, play-based instruction.

Brown tells the story of how, on his first day on campus, then-chair John O’Dwyer brought him to his classroom — and it was completely empty. Brown took the challenge and soon filled the room to overflowing with games, art, toys and books to intrigue and entrance his students.

Even now, 10 years into retirement, he greets visitors with science jokes (“There’s a restaurant on the moon. It has great food … but no atmosphere.”), shows off student artwork made with scotch tape and Polaroid sheets, and beguiles them with simple wooden folk toys that illustrate principles like gravity and kinetic energy.

“I created my own view of education,” teaching introductory physics courses for non-majors, such as Physics for Elementary Education Majors, and Ideas and Concepts in Physics, Brown says. To illustrate electric circuitry, he would have students practice troubleshooting. To measure the speed of a moving object, he would have them estimate the velocity of a cat running, a baby crawling, or a drop of water dripping down a wall. “That’s one way to have fun with metrics,” he says.

“For every topic, the students had to understand what it is, how it worked and have a demonstration for it.”

His most popular activity was the annual egg drop. Students would devise protective coverings for a raw egg and drop the package from the third floor of Snygg Hall. “The students were very creative and it was funny to see what they did,” says Brown, who over the years witnessed students dropping eggs in loaves of bread (“It worked, but if it breaks, you have French toast.”) and suspended from parachutes. The fun illustrates the principle of inertia and demonstrates how an airbag protects the occupants in a car crash. “The students’ work was eggs-cellent, eggs-traordinary, and an intell-egg-shell eggs-ercise,” quips Brown.

Brown’s creative approach to physics won him a Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1974.

In retirement, Brown is immersed in the history of physics. He is fascinated by how the ancient Greeks invented abstract math not for practical uses but for the sheer fun of it, and intrepid souls kept the spirit of science alive during the so-called Dark Ages. And he reads voraciously, especially biographies of his three heroes: Galileo, Einstein and Benjamin Franklin, the favorite son of Brown’s hometown of Philadelphia.

A widower, with two sons and a daughter living in the Central New York area, Brown also loves to listen to music and play ragtime and classical pieces on the piano, indulge his reading passions of poetry and children’s literature, and correspond with teachers here and abroad about ways to bring more F-U-N into their own classrooms.