



NCC

NASSAU
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE
FOUNDATION

The 2023 Gala

December 7, 2023
The Garden City Hotel

Produced in partnership with

LONG ISLAND
BUSINESSNEWS



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**Congratulates Nassau Community
College Foundation on the
2023 Annual Gala**



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The 2023 Gala

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- SOPHIA GARCIA
- FARHA KHAN
- MACKENZIE OWENS
- BELLA TIRIPICCHIO
- ISABELLA TWEDDLE
- STEPHANIE VILLALOBOS
- RYAN YOUNG
- ALICE ZHANG

- CREATIVE DIRECTORS**
- LINDSEY ANGIOLETTI
 - RUDY BREEDY

WELCOME FROM DR. MARIA P. CONZATTI '86 Chief Administrative Officer, Nassau Community College



Welcome to Nassau Community College (NCC) Foundation's 2023 Gala. On behalf of the College's Foundation Board, Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff and students, I greatly appreciate your participation in this celebration that appropriately coincides with the giving spirit of the holiday season. Your contribution is evidence of the strong support for NCC shared among the business, industry, local government officials, service communities, and families of Long Island through generations.

Congratulations to this year's honorees: Teachers Federal Credit Union (TFCU), Robert Costello, JD, Ed.D., Shivana Harriram '10, Derek Peterson, and Demetrius Watkins. This evening, we salute your numerous accomplishments and dedication to the College and community at large. The honor conferred by the Foundation recognizes your ongoing work and successes which inspire all of us.

This event commemorates, as well, the wider achievements of NCC as we have enjoyed sixty-three years of having provided exceptional education to our students and service to the County and Long Island metropolitan region. The achievements of our over one hundred and sixty thousand alumni are a clear testament to the fulfillment of the College's longstanding mission to facilitate the academic and social development of our students as productively engaged citizens of the world.

Special acknowledgment is extended to our sponsors, donors, and advocates for their heartfelt gifts. As a result of your generosity, this year's event has raised a record-breaking \$120,000. These monies will benefit student scholarships, faculty development programs, and campus enhancements, with one example being much-needed upgraded helmets for our NCC Lions football team.

I would like to express my gratitude to the 2023 Gala Committee and its Chair, Joseph Moscola, the NCC Foundation Board and its Chairman and NCC alumnus, Michael G. McGinty, and staff for the tireless efforts to encourage our students as they pursue their academic, personal, and professional goals. Your commitment is not just evident in the wonderful festivities in which we are all rejoicing this evening, but through the continuous endeavors you devote to the College in so many ways.

Thank you, all, again, for uplifting our College community, and best wishes for safe and happy holidays with family and friends.

Sincerely,

Maria P. Conzatti, Ed. D
Chief Administrative Officer, Nassau Community College
NCC Class of 1986

NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION MISSION

The purpose of the Foundation as outlined in its Certificate of Incorporation is to receive, hold, invest, and administer gifts and donations for Nassau Community College as well as its students and faculty. Our responsibilities include, but are not limited to fundraising and the distribution of those funds in support of student scholarship opportunities as well as growing our academic programs. The Foundation also supports faculty development as well as a variety of the College's cultural and leadership activities.



Nassau Community College Chief Administrative Officer

Maria P. Conzatti, Ed.D.

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WELCOME FROM JORGE L. GARDYN, MD, FACP Chair, Nassau Community College Board of Trustees



Welcome to Nassau Community College Foundation's Gala! We sincerely appreciate the support of all of our participants and salute our honorees for their numerous accomplishments and commitment to Nassau Community College.

Congratulations to this year's honorees:

- **Nassau Community College Excellence in Education Award Recipient** - Robert Costello, JD, Ed.D., SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor, Chair, Criminal Justice Department
- **Presidential Award of Excellence Recipient** - Shivana Harriram '10, YouTube Platform Manager, Netflix
- **Excellence in Innovation Award Recipient** - Derek Peterson, CEO, Soter Technologies, Inc.
- **Nassau Community College Spirit of Nassau Award Recipient** - Demetrius Watkins, Assistant Professor, FSA President, SGA Advisor, Student Personnel Services Department, Student Activities.
- **Caring for the Community Award Recipient** - Teachers Federal Credit Union

I would like to extend my gratitude to the 2023 Gala Benefit Committee spearheaded by Joe Moscola, Gala Chair, the NCC Foundation Board, and the Foundation's Director, Rudy J. Breedy, for their tireless efforts to make this event a success to benefit our students and their academic goals.

Thank you again for your support and enjoy the evening.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jorge L. Gardyn, M.D., F.A.C.P.
Chairman, Board of Trustees
Nassau Community College

WELCOME FROM MICHAEL MCGINTY '73 Chair, Nassau Community College Foundation Board of Directors



As the NCC Foundation Board Chair, Professor and Proud "NCC Lion", I would like to take this opportunity to thank The Nassau Community College Foundation Board of Directors, The 2023 Gala Committee, NCC Foundation Staff, our College's Chief Administrative Officer, Dr. Maria Conzatti and all of tonight's donors, volunteers and friends.

The Foundation is proud to support the students and faculty of Nassau Community College through scholarships and new educational programs. We could not do this work without your generosity tonight and throughout the year.

Best wishes to our honorees; Teachers Federal Credit Union, Robert Costello, JD, Ed.D., Shivana Harriram, Derek Peterson and Demetrius Watkins. We are sincerely grateful for their support and commitment to Nassau Community College and the Foundation. Congratulations!

Thank you again and I hope you enjoy this wonderful event!



Michael McGinty
NCC Foundation Board Chair
NCC Class of 1973

CONZATTI SEES BRIGHT FUTURE FOR NCC

DR. MARIA CONZATTI REFLECTS ON HER OWN JOURNEY AS AN NCC ALUM

By Sofia Garcia

Every September, the campus at Nassau Community College (NCC) is revived with anticipation, eagerness, and excitement filling the air for the first day of classes. Student parents can be found dropping off their rambunctious little ones at The Children's Greenhouse campus childcare center. Friends catch up over iced matcha lattes at the campus Starbucks. NCC Lions football players converse about the important upcoming game. The energy around



Dr. Maria Conzatti

campus is simply electric. This scene holds a special place in the heart of Dr. Maria Conzatti, who is a first-generation college graduate, the first female Chief Administrative Officer of Nassau Community College, and an alumna of NCC.

After graduating from Nassau, Dr. Conzatti went on to Adelphi University, where she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in management and a Master's in corporate finance and investment

with a concentration in international business. She continued her education at St. John's University, where she earned her doctorate in educational leadership. Although her résumé speaks for itself, she explains that her journey to becoming the first female Chief Academic Officer of NCC was not as easy as it sounds.

"I didn't start with any inkling of 'I'm looking to break a barrier.'" What set Dr. Conzatti on her path was hearing from her traditional immigrant father, "You're a girl, and girls get married and have babies. Why would I spend my money sending you to college?" This implicit challenge was the beginning of her journey. She credits her drive and the affordable high-quality resources at Nassau Community College with helping her complete her goal. Her message to those who are confronted with a "No:" "Find a way, and you will find people there to help you."

Dr. Conzatti sees herself in students today, especially in first-generation college students. She worked two jobs to put herself through college and paid her own tuition. She found that having a sense of community at Nassau Community College was essential in jump-start-

ing her educational career. When she was at Nassau Community College, she felt that the students and staff had a willingness to help and it made her feel comfortable. Many enthusiastic students often ask: "Why can't Nassau be a four-year college?" She takes pride in the ever-growing programs, like the Nassau Community College – SUNY Empire State University Multi-Award Nursing Program (NCC - ESC) dual-degree multi-award program, which empowers students to become registered nurses (R.S.) These programs are coupled with the sense of community among the dedicated students and faculty. She continues to push for an ever-evolving Nassau Community College.

Dr. Conzatti urges those who are thinking about attending Nassau Community College not to have any preconceived notions of "who we are" and not to let comments like "Oh, it's a community college" or "it's the 13th grade" stop you from visiting campus. She heard those kinds of remarks during her time as a student, and those misunderstandings of the mission, purpose, and opportunities at community colleges have been around for decades. Dr. Conzatti urges students to come and to find out what the college is all about, because, once students start at NCC, they see how their dreams can become a reality. Community colleges transform the lives of low- and middle-income students. She credits this success to the highly credentialed NCC faculty who often simultaneously "teach at private institutions where students pay 3,4,5 times the NCC tuition." When she was a student, she had not realized that some of her professors taught at various pricier private institutions: "That was a revelation to me. I had no idea that was the case and I don't think most students understand that." This means that students are getting the same education as other private institutions, but at a significantly lower price.

Being a student at Nassau Community College allows you the space to discover the person you want to be. The most critical advice Dr. Conzatti gives students starting at Nassau Community College is that it is okay not to know how you want your future to look. "The best place to [figure it out] is here. It certainly was for me." She values her "fancy" degrees from private four-year schools, but explains, "My beginning was here," and this is where she figured it all out. Initially, Dr. Conzatti questioned if she had made the right choice in pursuing a major that was a non-traditional female major. However, "Day by day, semester by semester" – everything will work out – and you might even find yourself defying the odds."



NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



Congratulations to the Nassau Community College Foundation Gala Honorees for their amazing accomplishments and commitment to Nassau Community College.

Nassau Community College Excellence in Education Award Recipient

ROBERT COSTELLO, JD, ED.D.
SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor,
Chair, Criminal Justice Department

Presidential Award of Excellence Recipient

SHIVANA HARRIRAM '10
YouTube Platform Manager, Netflix

Excellence in Innovation Award Recipient

DEREK PETERSON, CEO
Soter Technologies, Inc.

Nassau Community College Spirit of Nassau Award Recipient

DEMETRIUS WATKINS
Assistant Professor

Caring for the Community Award Recipient

TEACHERS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

I would like to extend my gratitude to the 2023 Planning Committee, NCC Foundation Board and Director Rudy Breedy for making this the most successful fundraising year in the event's history.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. P. Conzatti'.

Dr. Maria P. Conzatti
Chief Administrative Officer
Nassau Community College

TEACHERS CARES FOR THE COMMUNITY

TEACHERS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION



By Stephanie Villalobos

Teachers Federal Credit Union (Teachers) recently established a partnership with Nassau Community College to build a foundation of financial wellness that gives back to the college by supporting the faculty and staff. By extension, this generous endeavor supports the education of NCC students and our Long Island community.

Teachers Federal Credit Union began in 1952 and for more than 71 years, it has provided guidance to help members of the community build a strong financial foundation. As a credit union, it supports educators on their financial journey. Teachers became one of the largest credit unions in the country with a nationwide charter of \$9.7 billion in assets, and more than 460,000 members that are involved to make the community better. Teachers is committed to providing the best financial products, education, and member services to everyone. They care about their members, and they want what's best for the community.

Teachers is not like a regular bank; it's special. While traditional banks are owned by shareholders, credit unions are owned by the members within the organization. Members who choose to bank at Teachers Federal Credit Union do so knowing that their involvement helps support our local Long Island community, including helping the students, staff, and faculty of Nassau Community College. Teachers prioritizes member needs and financial well-being by offering lower rates on loans, fewer fees, and higher yields on deposits. As a member-owned financial service organization, every decision is made with the best interest of its members in mind.

One of the five guiding principles of Teachers is to share its time, energy, and resources with other organizations that also support the causes that promote education, human services, economic development, and research. For Nassau Community College, the Teachers Federal Credit Union plan is to build a partnership over the next year by collaborating on several campus community initiatives and activations. In addition to its tremendous support of NCC, Teachers is also a proud partner of The American Cancer Society. It serves the American Cancer Society as a sponsor of Making Strides of Long Island, and sponsors Making Strides of Tampa and Making Strides of Eastern Long Island as well. October is breast cancer awareness

“One of the five guiding principles of TFCU is to share its time, energy, and resources with other organizations that also support the causes that promote education, human services, economic development, and research.”

month and Teachers has raised more than \$123,000 to support breast cancer research and awareness. This is a huge accomplishment — the breast cancer research conducted will help millions of people. Teachers Federal Credit Union devotes significant time and resources into the communities it supports.

Teachers Federal Credit Union is receiving the Nassau Community College Caring for Community award because of all the work it has done giving back to the community, colleges, students, faculty, and other organizations. Teachers is dedicated making a positive impact on the lives of all people in our community.



TEACHERS
federal credit union

IS PROUD TO ACCEPT THE
NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE
CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY AWARD

and congratulates all honorees for
their well-deserved recognition.

DR. ROBERT COSTELLO IS AN EXCELLENT EDUCATOR

**SUNY DISTINGUISHED TEACHING PROFESSOR
CHAIR, CRIMINAL JUSTICE DEPARTMENT
NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

By Isabella Tweddle

In the world of academia, there are educators whose career paths take unexpected turns, leading them to extraordinary achievements. Robert Costello, J.D., Ed.D., is one such individual, whose remarkable journey from an undergraduate student unsure of his career path to a recipient of the Excellence in Education Award is a testament to the transformative power of education. For Dr. Costello, it all started as a community service project during his time as an undergraduate student at Hofstra, where he majored in social science. Unsure of his career path, it was only when he began tutoring fifth and sixth graders that Dr. Costello found his calling in teaching. Today, after 28 years in the field, he is a devoted professor who imparts knowledge from the heart. Dr. Costello is a firm believer that your career chooses you and not the other way around. He was driven to study criminal justice because of its interdisciplinarity: it has a little bit of everything – sociology, law, and community building.



Dr. Robert Costello

In January 1997, Dr. Costello embarked on a new chapter of his life as a part-time instructor in the sociology department at Nassau Community College. Just two months later, he fell in love with the place, and within two years, he became an integral part of the criminal justice program. In 2003, he was elected as the chairperson, cementing his role in shaping the future of the department. While teaching at Nassau Community College, Dr. Costello attended Dowling College and worked toward a doctorate in Educational Leadership, attending full-time during the summer “vacation.” Dr. Costello

also holds a Master’s degree in Sociology and a Juris Doctor degree, both from St. John’s University, as well as a Master’s degree in Criminal Justice from SUNY Albany. After 20 years of full-time teaching, he began writing textbooks, a challenge to himself that he is proud to have accomplished. His textbooks support organizations such as the NCC Foundation, which provides community college students with scholarship; Gideon’s Promise, a non-profit devoted to the tenets of Gideon v. Wainwright (1963), the United States Supreme Court ruling that unanimously ruled every person accused of a crime in America must be provided with legal defense counsel, regardless of their economic status or ability to pay; and NJ LEEP, NJ Law and Education Empowerment Program, an organization based in Newark, New Jersey that academically prepares nontraditional high school students for college.

One of Dr. Costello’s defining characteristics as an educator is his strong focus

on building personal relationships with his students. He believes that the true essence of his contributions to Nassau Community College is not just teaching the topic of criminal justice but more importantly, teaching students and helping them to achieve their goals. His biggest accomplishment as a professor is hearing from his former students and seeing that they’ve accomplished their dreams, whether it’s becoming homeowners, building successful careers, or pursuing higher education. Dr. Costello’s dedication to his students deserves the utmost recognition.

For Dr. Costello, Nassau Community College is not a steppingstone; it is the cornerstone of one’s education. That cornerstone is essential. Dr. Costello is proud that Nassau Community College is open to all, with quality programs, quality instructors, small classes, and robust student services. It gives faculty and students the opportunity to collaborate in creating a valuable learning environments making NCC the college to attend.

Dr. Costello’s belief in the importance of education for middle-class attainment is unwavering. He understands that it’s important to ensure a career for future economic success and stability. Dr. Costello sees the field of criminal justice as a pathway to achieving middle-class status, providing stability, career prospects, and the means to support a family. He suggests that those seeking a career in criminal justice take as many exams as possible, because you never know who’s going to hire you.

Receiving the Excellence in Education Award is a moment of pride for Dr. Costello, who sees it as a collective achievement for the entire faculty. He is honored to represent NCC staff and says this was “a group effort.” Dr. Costello also received a Fulbright Scholar’s Award to lecture at the University of Malta Faculty of Law, a rare achievement for a community college professor. Other honors include serving as a Visiting Scholar at the University of Cambridge’s Institute of Criminology, an Associate Faculty Member for Columbia University’s Faculty Seminar Series, and a Research Associate at Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University.

Last year, the State University of New York Board of Trustees promoted Dr. Costello to SUNY’s highest academic rank of Distinguished Teaching Professor. He is the sixth faculty member in college history to receive that award. The most rewarding part about being at NCC for Dr. Costello is that the faculty’s final product is their students progress.

Dr. Robert Costello’s journey is an inspiring narrative of an educator’s impact on the lives of those he teaches. His story is a testament to the unexpected paths life can take and the incredible influence a dedicated educator can have. Dr. Costello understands that the NCC faculty work hard in their respective areas and are networked together to guide students to achieve their goals, which is a testament to the strength of the college. He believes working on behalf of the students is the most fulfilling aspect of his career. By dedicating his life to his students, Dr. Costello leaves an indelible mark on their educational journeys.

CONGRATULATIONS

TO MY FELLOW HONOREES

TEACHERS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION
CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY AWARD RECIPIENT

NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL, COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN CHANGE
THE WORLD; INDEED, IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS.
MARGARET MEAD

SHIVANA HARRIRAM '10
PRESIDENTIAL AWARD OF EXCELLENCE RECIPIENT

PERFECTION IS NOT ATTAINABLE, BUT IF WE CHASE PERFECTION WE CAN CATCH EXCELLENCE.
VINCE LOMBARDI

DEREK PETERSON
EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION AWARD RECIPIENT

INNOVATION IS THE ABILITY TO SEE CHANGE AS AN OPPORTUNITY - NOT A THREAT.
STEVE JOBS

DEMETRIUS WATKINS
SPIRIT OF NASSAU AWARD RECIPIENT

SPIRIT IS THE INVISIBLE FORCE MADE VISIBLE IN LIFE.
MAYA ANGELOU

&

THANK YOU TO THE NCC FOUNDATION
FOR A WONDERFUL GALA!

ROBERT COSTELLO, JD, ED.D.

SUNY DISTINGUISHED TEACHING PROFESSIONAL
CHAIR, CRIMINAL JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AT NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE

NCC EDUCATION TOOK HARRIRAM FROM NASSAU TO NETFLIX

SHIVANA HARRIRAM '10
YOUTUBE PLATFORM MANAGER
NETFLIX, INC.

BY Farha Khan

Shivana Harriram, a distinguished alumna of Nassau Community College (NCC) who has carved a successful career path in the fields of digital media and journalism, did not always enjoy school. In fact, she was not certain that she even wanted to attend college. Her journey from a reluctant college student to a driven professional, currently the YouTube Platform Manager at Netflix, showcases the transformative power of Nassau Community College. Harriram is set to receive the Presidential Award of Excellence at the NCC Gala at the



Shivana Harriram

Garden City Hotel on December 7.

As we delve into her educational background, Harriram candidly admits that her decision to attend NCC was primarily driven by the affordability and accessibility of the college. For someone who was not very fond of high school, her experience at the college dramatically changed her perspective on education. Harriram developed a strong interest in history, acknowledging that her initial exposure to Western history was limited. Her classes were

so interesting that she found herself en-

gaging in independent research beyond the scope of the class. Harriram read her history textbooks from cover to cover, a practice she hadn't adopted before. Being in college opened various new doors of learning and socializing for her; she explored subjects like philosophy, acting, and other liberal arts courses. Having a strong guidance system was also very important to her during her college career. Harriram credits the supportive and caring professors at NCC for playing a pivotal role in her educational journey. She fondly recalls a math professor who took the time to patiently guide her through complex problems during office hours, emphasizing the nurturing environment that Nassau provides.

Harriram found herself becoming passionate about learning and even joined various clubs, including the Vignette, the campus newspaper. Working for the Vignette had a profound impact on her life. She networked with other like-minded students and built lasting, lifelong friendships. Being a reporter enhanced her confidence. She would wait outside the office of the campus president and other

high-ranking administrators for investigative stories. The respect afforded to her as a student journalist by the administration inspired her to initially pursue a career in journalism.

Her experience at the college instilled in her the confidence and ambition to pursue her academic interests. Staying within the SUNY system, Harriram continued her education at Stony Brook University where she actively participated in clubs and continued to expand her knowledge. While it can be daunting to be a woman in her field of work, she empowered other women who want to write and publish their work on campus to become editors within Stony Brook's campus clubs. She pursued a degree in History with a minor in Journalism, learned Arabic and developed a professional proficiency.

“Harriram highlights the significance of community college education as a vital resource for students who may not be entirely sure of their career path or are not ready to leave home immediately after high school. She acknowledges the nurturing environment, the financial benefits, and the space that NCC provided for her to explore her interests and develop a sense of direction.”

After graduating from Stony Brook, Harriram secured an internship at TED, a turning point that shifted her perspective toward digital media and entertainment. She embraced the evolving landscape of digital media and entertainment, leveraging her experience to build a successful career. Harriram emphasizes the importance of adapting to changing circumstances and seizing opportunities when they arise. This flexibility and resilience have been crucial in navigating her career. The opportunity to become YouTube Platform Manager at Netflix brought her to Los Angeles, where she currently resides.

Harriram highlights the significance of community college education as a vital resource for students who may not be entirely sure of their career path or are not ready to leave home immediately after high school. She acknowledges the nurturing environment, the financial benefits, and the space that NCC provided for her to explore her interests and develop a sense of direction. Harriram firmly believes that NCC played a pivotal role in her educational journey and her professional success.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2023 HONOREES

ROBERT COSTELLO, JD, E.D.
TEACHERS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION
SHIVANA HARRIRAM '10
DEREK PETERSON
&
DEMETRIUS A. WATKINS

YOUR MANY & VARIED CONTRIBUTIONS ARE IMPRESSIVE

W. HUBERT KEEN, PH.D.

Congratulations to

**Nassau
Community
College**

and their 2023 Gala Honorees.

We are inspired by your dedication and
level of commitment to the community.

Your friends at NYU Langone Health



SOTER TECHNOLOGIES EXCELS IN INNOVATION

DEREK PETERSON

CEO

SOTER TECHNOLOGIES

By Bella Tiripicchio

Derek Peterson, CEO of Soter Technologies, headquartered in Ronkonkoma, New York, is widely recognized for his development of the “FlySense” vaping detection and anti-bullying sensor. As a result of this, he has fostered numerous relationships with countless schools. Nassau Community College, located in Garden City, NY, is among them. Despite the fact Peterson did not graduate from Nassau Community College, he has maintained a strong connection with the school. In fact, he will be the recipient of the Excellence in Innovation Award at the Nassau Community College Gala on December 7, 2023. While this may seem like a success fairytale, it was not always that way. In fact, Peterson has humble origins.



Derek Peterson

Peterson is a “Long Island child through and through.” A graduate of Bay Shore High School, he then went on to attend Stony Brook University. At Stony Brook he earned a bachelor of science degree in computer science and applied mathematics. Peterson was always interested in computer science and technology. In his words, “I guess you might say I’m old-school. I started with computers when it was just punching cards.” After graduating from Stony Brook, Peterson went right to work. He climbed the ranks at a company called Simul Technologies and eventually worked his way up to Vice President of Engineering. After

years of hard work and dedication, he ventured to startup his own company and is now the CEO of Soter Technologies.

Soter derives its name from the Greek myth of Soter who personified safety. Towards that end, Soter Technologies’ signature product is called FlySense. Its main purpose is to serve as an anti-vaping and anti-bullying detection sensor. FlySense is commonly placed in school locker rooms and bathrooms to detect the presence of the aforementioned. While there was no one specific catalyst or event for Peterson and Soter Technologies to invent FlySense, he was inspired in part by his experiences being bullied throughout his high school years. In his words, “I always had a soft spot to help people not be bullied.” The FlySense device works by using audio sensors to detect bullying behavior. When significant audio is detected, it sends a text and/or email to school administrators with the location of the event. Vaping is detected with a similar process. FlySense can determine the location of vaping activity on school grounds. With Peterson’s unique technology, there has been a decrease in both vaping and bullying throughout schools that employ the device. “They will end up seeing close to an

85% reduction in vaping on school grounds,” he says when discussing the statistics.

Despite now being a leader in the technology field, Peterson never saw himself in this type of position. He is very grateful for where his life has taken him. Peterson’s role has allowed him to be on multiple newscasts, such as CNN and MSNBC, to discuss his technologies and goals to a wider audience. However, he views his work as far from complete and harbors aspirations to further advance safety measures across various settings. His core philosophy revolves around the fundamental question of “How can we keep people safe?” and his ambition is for Soter Technologies to become a household name in the realm of safety, not only within educational institutions but also in retail establishments, cinemas, and beyond.

In recognition of Derek Peterson’s remarkable contributions to enhancing school safety and his deep ties to Nassau Community College, he was chosen to receive the Nassau Community College Excellence in Innovation Award. This award serves as a testament to his dedication to making educational institutions safer and underscores his enduring connection to NCC. Derek’s innovative spirit and commitment to the well-being of students and faculty make him a worthy recipient of this prestigious honor. It is known that Nassau Community College has students of many different backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. A lot of people attend NCC in preparation for a four-year program, or to save money. This means students of many different backgrounds go to the college. Those who grew up without wealth can achieve their dreams and goals at Nassau. Peterson’s thoughts on this are simple. He says, “Work hard. I grew up with humble beginnings, and I just continued to press on. Never take no for an answer. Press on.”

In conclusion, Derek Peterson’s journey from graduating Bay Shore High School to becoming the CEO of Soter Technologies is a testament to the power of determination, the desire to make a positive impact, and overall hard work. His dedication to enhancing school safety, manifested through the development of the FlySense, showcases his commitment to creating a better environment for students. Through his generous support of entrepreneurial programs at Nassau Community College and his efforts in job recruitment for students, he has fostered a strong connection with the institution. Peterson’s success story is a source of inspiration for students at NCC and beyond, proving that with hard work and persistence, one can rise to the top. The Nassau Community College Excellence in Innovation Award rightly celebrates Derek Peterson’s remarkable contributions and his unyielding commitment to student well-being, making him a deserving recipient of this prestigious honor. His sage counsel, “Never take no for an answer. Press on,” resonates as an important call to action.

SOTER TECHNOLOGIES

Our journey began with the vision of our CEO and Founder, Derek Peterson, who experienced bullying as a student. As an engineer, he dedicated himself to developing a device that would prevent future generations from enduring similar hardships. Thus, FlySense® was born, a groundbreaking device capable of monitoring sound in areas where cameras and microphones are restricted.



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Derek Peterson, CEO

“Using technology to deter and reduce vaping and bullying on school campuses is only part of the Soter Technologies solutions. We want to see students break their unhealthy vaping habits or nicotine addiction and engage in positive interactions with their peers. We have found that when schools use our technology as a tool to enhance health and wellness and combine them with health and safety awareness programs, they see a significant decrease in vaping on their campuses,” said Peterson.

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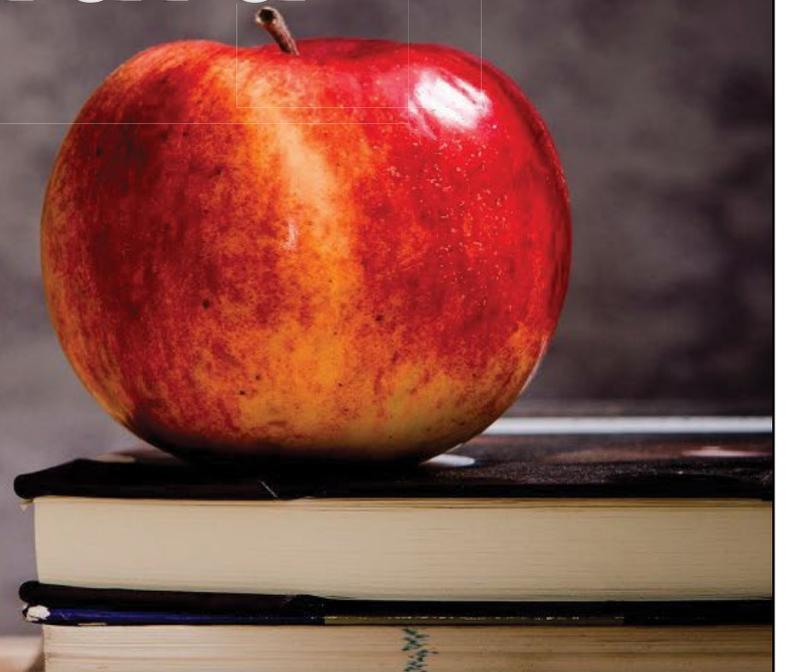
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NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By Sofia Garcia

As passionate and involved students socialize and fundraise for Nassau Community College clubs and organizations, there are dedicated staff and administrators to support them in these endeavors. One such administrator is Professor Demetrius Watkins. You can find him teaching enthusiastically in the classroom or helping organize the more than eighty student clubs and organizations at NCC. "I'm the person that would be very, very happy working in the background, just doing what I do and not looking to be at the forefront," he says. It would be remiss not to highlight the effort and dedication Prof. Watkins has put into his career at Nassau Community College since April 2008. He is an



Demetrius Watkins

Asst. Professor of Student Personnel Services and President of the Faculty Student Association at NCC. Originally from Selma, Alabama, Prof. Watkins earned his bachelor's degree in psychology at Troy State University. He continued his education at Columbia Teachers College and graduated with a master's in organizational psychology and adult learning.

Prof. Watkins was a stay-at-home dad applying for various positions that were convenient for a working parent when a friend recommended NCC and he has been at the college ever since. He explains that the diverse student body at Nassau is very valuable to him. Growing up in a small town in Alabama, diversity was not all that common. Starting out at Nassau Community College, Prof. Watkins found the various cultures of students refreshing and new. "You get into [the] food, you get into ways of being. You get into cultural norms," he notes. He believes that being exposed to this type of environment creates well-rounded individuals who want to continue to learn from their peers.

Prof. Watkins also believes that involvement in student clubs and activities makes for a versatile individual and provides opportunities to learn things that are not necessarily taught in the classroom. "Students meet friends, they develop leadership [skills], they learn conflict resolution and they learn that they are going

to have to work with people that you don't always agree with," he says. Prof. Watkins' reminds his students to stay goal-oriented and keep a balance between life inside and outside of the classroom. "You have to find a healthy balance, and you have to manage your time well," he maintains. This lesson easily transfers throughout a student's professional and academic career. Prof. Watkins says that students' number one goal should be earning their degree. "Your degree won't say student government. Your degree won't say programming board," he notes. Prof. Watkins urges students to prioritize their academics and not overexert themselves or go to extremes. For students who are reluctant to participate, he simply advises them to try at least one club. "[You can create] lifelong friendships, lifelong relationships that you build with your advisor, lifelong relationships that you have, even outside of Nassau," he states.

"Prof. Watkins was a stay-at-home dad applying for various positions that were convenient for a working parent when a friend recommended NCC and he has been at the college ever since. He explains that the diverse student body at Nassau is very valuable to him. Growing up in a small town in Alabama, diversity was not all that common. Starting out at Nassau Community College, Prof. Watkins found the various cultures of students refreshing and new."

"The wonderful thing that takes place here at Nassau Community College is that if you see [a club] that we don't have you can develop it." The opportunities are truly endless. Some of the college's student clubs include the Marketing Club, Entrepreneurship Club, Latin Club, and the award-winning creative writing literary journal, LUNA. Prof. Watkin uses pieces from LUNA in his classes and is constantly amazed by the work of the students. The creativity of all of the clubs and organizations with their activities, fundraisers and various field trips is impressive.

For Prof. Watkins, the best way to leave your mark is to make a significant impact. This can be accomplished through your relationships, contributions, and dedication. Prof. Watkins urges students to continue to find what their passions are and work towards their goals. Give opportunities presented to you a shot and you never know what could happen, who you'll meet, or who you'll become!



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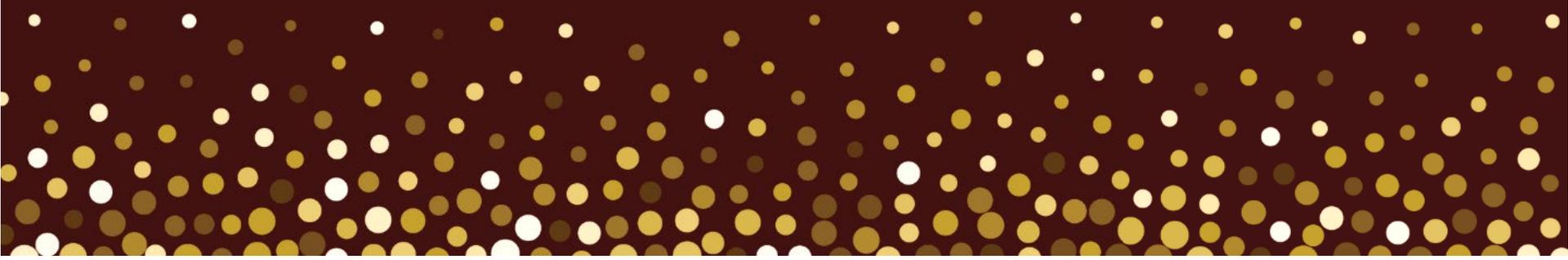
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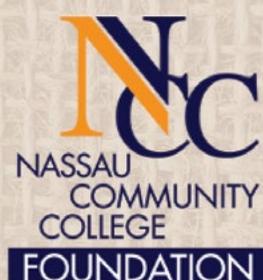
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MAYOR OF ISLAND PARK AND PRESIDENT OF NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION BOARD REFLECTS ON LESSONS LEARNED AT NCC

By Alice Zhang and Mackenzie Owens

After Hurricane Sandy hit the United States in October 2012, the Village of Island Park was left devastated. Many important facilities, such as schools, were destroyed, and flooding became a massive issue. During this time, Michael McGinty was the chairman of Island Park's Zoning Board. His responsibilities grew significantly in the wake of the storm as rebuilding the village became a priority, and he was encouraged by others to officially run for mayor. Many people approached him and pushed him to run. After talking with his wife, Jean, she told him, "You've got to do this thing." He won his first election by 61% and became the mayor of Island Park. In the last two elections he ran without opposition. Running for mayor takes great courage and commitment to your community, values he learned as a student at Nassau Community College.

"There's no better education" McGinty declares. He attributes his academic success at his next school, Queens College, to NCC's professors and "small town" learning atmosphere: "This is a campus where everybody cares about everybody."

McGinty attended Holy Cross Catholic High School, and when it came to choose which college he wanted to attend, he told his mother that he wanted to go to Villanova. His mother's response was, "That's wonderful. Where is the money coming from?"

McGinty then set his sights on Nassau Community College because it was affordable. He loved the idea of a small college. He loved that the students and faculty can build such close relationships. He believes that it's like a small town because everyone knows each other and cares for each other. He always felt like the professors truly cared about their students. Another perk of Nassau Community College is that students can afford to take risks and explore classes in a variety of subjects. Where he has not pursued professional acting, he has fond memories of a drama class, a class he would not have been able to afford to enjoy if he had enrolled at a pricier institution.

It is his profound love for Nassau Community College that keeps him an active member of the community. He is the President of the Board of the NCC Foundation and a supporter of the Alumni Association. "I think the Alumni Association is a very important facet of the college. The fact that it's now interrelated with the College Foundation is a great move forward."

McGinty is also an adjunct math professor at Nassau Community College. He has been teaching at Nassau Community College for over twenty years, and describes his experience as a math professor at NCC as nothing but positive, "the student

population consists of intelligent individuals with dynamic personalities." As an adjunct professor, McGinty works hard to ensure every student succeeds. This includes searching for scholarship opportunities, making sure that students are attending their classes, and providing them with other unique learning opportunities.

The many roles McGinty plays in both the community of Island Park and at Nassau Community College are proof of his commitment to helping people.

McGinty's primary focus as mayor of Island Park in 2014 was restoring the village after Hurricane Sandy. To stress the scale of the aftermath, McGinty emphasizes that "almost everything was gone." In fact, one of the first decisions he made was to purchase two firetrucks under a lease purchase agreement in order to rebuild the firehouse and turn it into an emergency management center.

Another major accomplishment of McGinty's during his time in office is bringing in \$45.5 million for post-hurricane projects, which included flood-mitigation, construction, and drainage projects. The restoration of Island Park was a massive undertaking that he worked hard to organize.

"I've learned not to be afraid to reach out to anybody that can give me some assistance," McGinty says. "No one knows you need help if you don't ask." To ensure that he is well-connected, he stays in contact with notable individuals such as the State Assemblyman and the State Senator, as well a former U.S. Senator. His advice applies to life in general—if there is something you need help with, do not be nervous about asking for it.

McGinty's contributions to the Village of Island Park as mayor in the wake of a huge natural disaster are significant, but his dedication to and presence in the NCC community must not be overlooked. His role as professor has left many positive impressions in the minds of his students, and his dedication to providing NCC's students with the best possible opportunities is commendable.

Investment in Nassau Community College, McGinty says, is for business leaders, "the opportunity to invest in future employees. You have an opportunity to increase the economic value of your business with our students." For example, he cites Northwell's Earn and Learn scholarship opportunities that allow highly motivated prospective medical assistants a fully funded opportunity to attend Nassau Community College and to become a Northwell employee after graduation. McGinty asserts that NCC students are "local people" who are culturally diverse and highly educated and they would be an asset to any business.

"You can't do better than tying yourself financially and academically to Nassau Community College," he declares.

WELCOME FROM JOE MOSCOLA, PA-C, MBA Gala Chair, Nassau Community College Foundation Board of Directors



Welcome Friends of Nassau Community College Foundation, Colleagues and this evening's Honorees!

On behalf of Nassau Community College 2023 Gala Committee and as this year's gala chair, I would like to thank you all for your generosity and support. Raising funds for this incredible college while also having the opportunity to celebrate this year's honorees; Teachers Federal Credit Union, Robert Costello, JD, Ed.D, Shivana Harriram '10, Derek Peterson and Demetrius Watkins. We are tremendously appreciative of their support and commitment to Nassau Community College and the Foundation.

Having lived in Nassau County for most of my life along with being a part of the Northwell for 20 years, events and programs like this connect us to the community while providing a diverse pipeline into companies like ours. We are all very grateful for the support and commitment to the students and faculty shown this evening.

We thank you once again and hope you enjoy the evening.

Sincerely,

Joe Moscola

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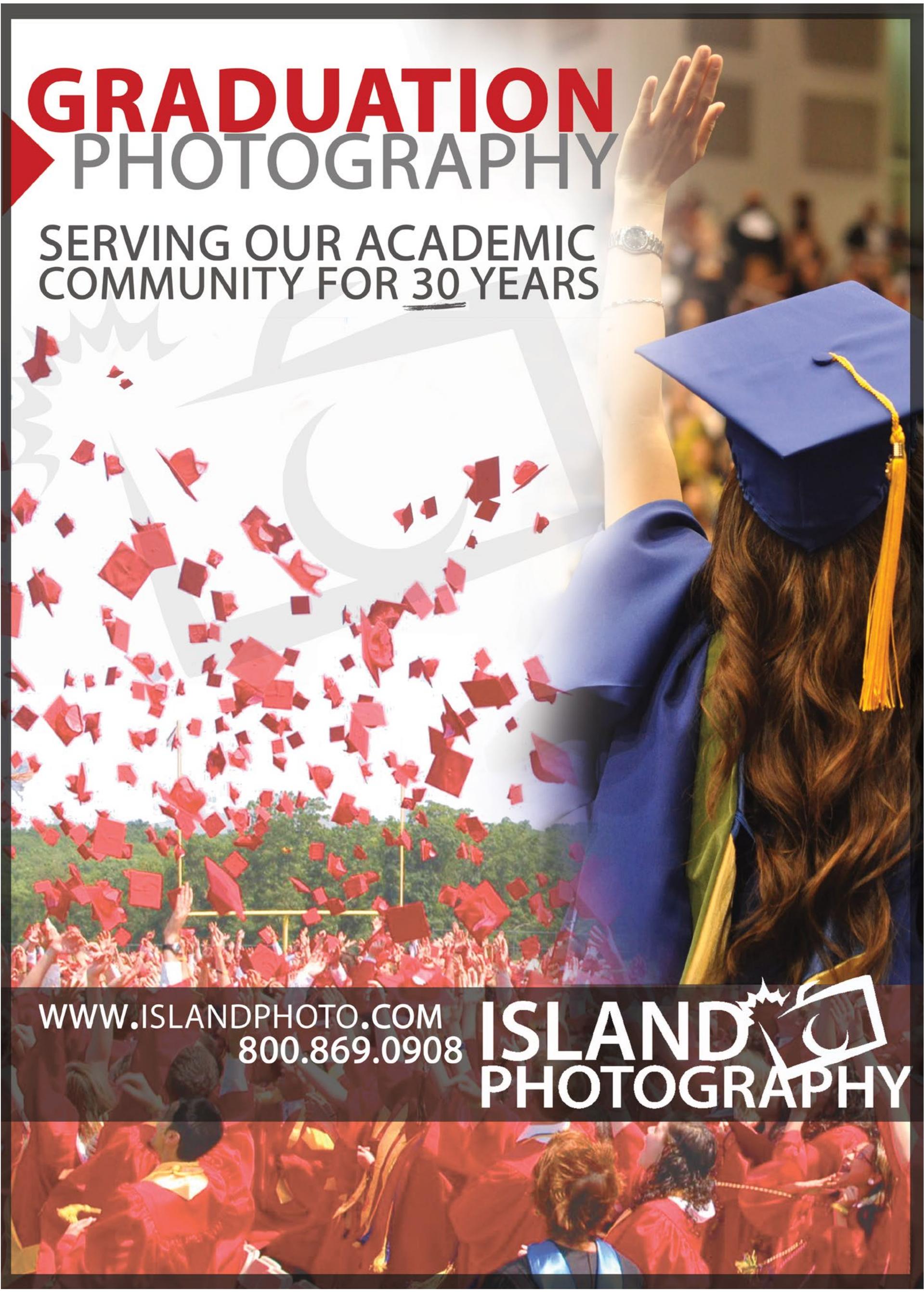
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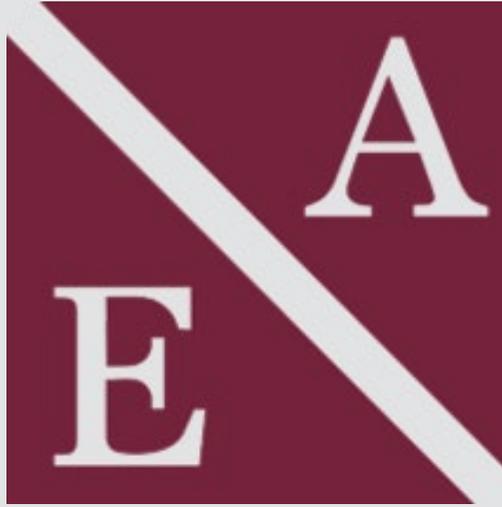
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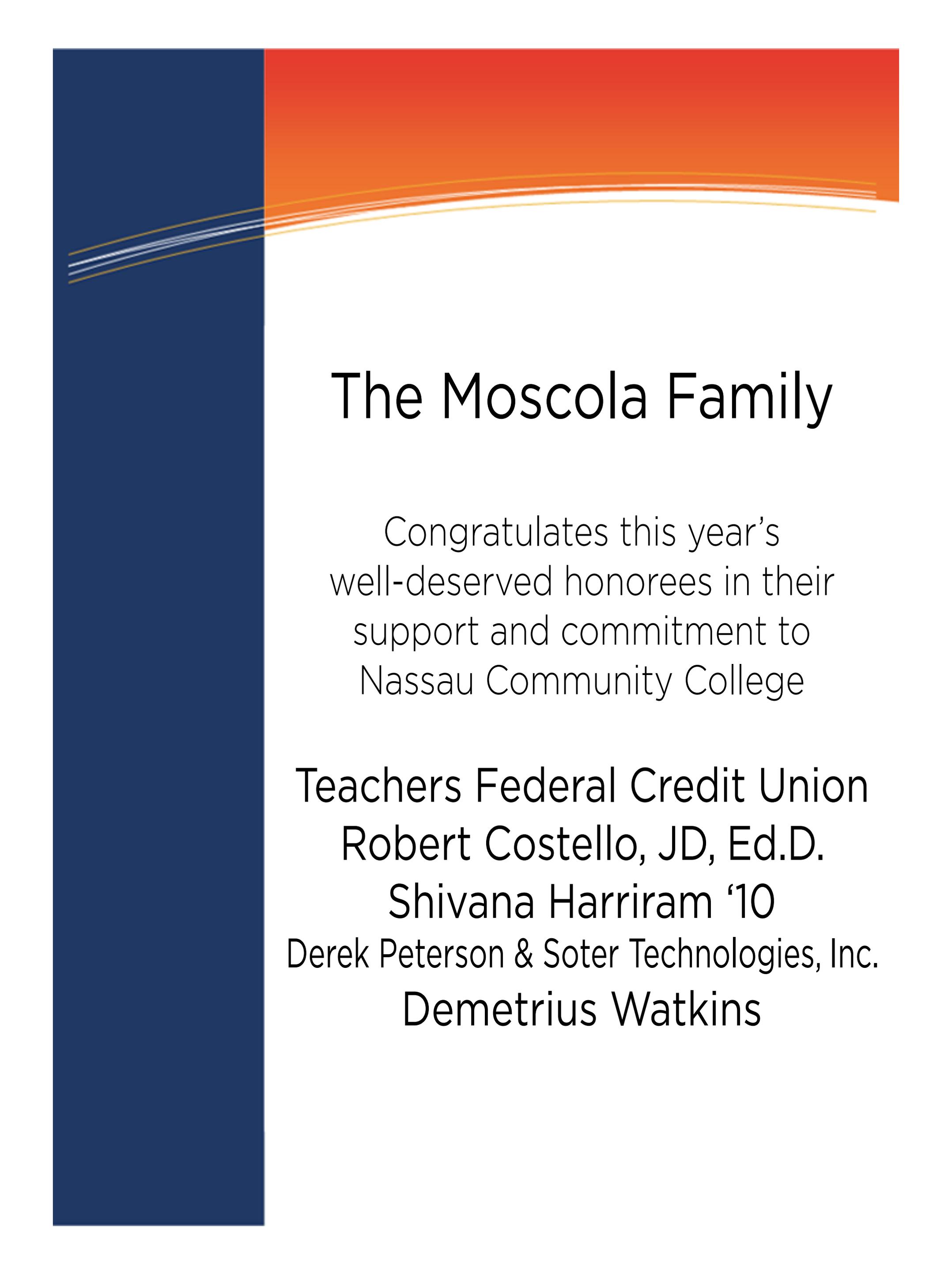


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We are proud to support Joe Moscola for his dedication as Gala Chair and The Nassau Community College Foundation.

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