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NORTH HARRIS MONTGOMERY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICTHAS

Winter, 1994

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Photo by LaNae Ilseng

NHMCCD offers no-cost services

HANKS TO THE hard work of the North Harris Montgomery Community College District in securing funding, the district is able to provide numerous programs and services at no cost to patrons.

College libraries, Small Business Development Centers, community education, fine arts performances and physical education facilities are among the sources of no-cost services and activities offered by the district.

Hundreds of existing and start-up businesses, as well as aspiring entrepreneurs, take advantage of the no-cost counseling offered by NHMCCD's Small Business Development Centers.

"The cornerstone of the SBDC program is counseling, which is offered at no cost to the individual and is unlimited in terms of hours and duration," Ray Laughter, Executive Director of the district's Center for Business and Economic Development, says.

Through their Community Education divisions, the district offers a number of no-cost services. Kingwood, Tomball and Montgomery Colleges offer GED preparation and English as a second language classes at no charge, and North Harris College offers no-cost ESL classes. The

District Office also offers no-cost GED preparation classes, which are augmented by the recently opened Literacy Learning Center. The center features PLATO basic skills software and other adult basic education resources.

Sondra Whitlow, Kingwood College Dean of Community Education, says both GED and ESL classes are extremely popular. "I think individuals are realizing they need their basic skills improved to move up in the work place," she says. "Completing these courses results in a lot of personal satisfaction and fulfillment, too."

SBDC counseling and GED preparation programs are, in all or part, paid for by federal funds. No-cost GED programs are extended to individuals who qualify under federal guidelines. ESL and adult basic education courses are funded through the Texas Education Agency.

The GED classes are opening educational doors for such students as Yolanda Guzman, who is currently taking GED classes at the District Office. Guzman, who dropped out of school after the sixth grade, has tried several times to obtain her GED but has found mathematics to be a stumbling block. Thanks in part to the Literacy Learning Center and the PLATO math tutorials, Guzman feels confident she will complete the course and earn her GED.

"I can't even begin to express my change in thinking," Guzman says. "The whole difference is the computer — it's just so easy now to learn math, I wonder how I could have missed it before."

Kingwood College offers occasional no-cost seminars. In the past year, the college presented a financial aid seminar and a seminar called "Honey, They Shrunk the Check" to help people prepare in case they lost their jobs.

"I think it's our job to provide the no-cost seminars and the things we do," Whitlow says. "This is the community's college and when we provide these services, it helps them and it helps us."

The college libraries and learning resource centers are other no-cost resources. In-district residents can check out books and anyone may use reference material, including the Cole Directory for Greater Houston and Datapro Manuals (for office automation).

"The reference staff is always ready to help the community with its information needs," says Elizabeth Lunden, Director of the Kingwood

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Harry Morris, AFDC/Adult Training Center Project Coordinator, helps Yolanda Guzman take advantage of the no-cost services for GED students.

Making a bottom-line difference

SBDCs + small businesses = a positive formula for success

OUNSELORS OF THE North Harris Montgomery Community College District's Small Business Development Centers at North Harris, Kingwood, Tomball and Montgomery Colleges are a lot like weather forecasters: They can't change the storms but they can tell you where they are.

Each year, the SBDCs offer seminars and individual business counseling for hundreds of existing and start-up businesses, as well as those in the idea stage. More than 8,000 clients have received assistance since the college district

opened its first SBDC in 1985.

According to Mike Henry, Kingwood College SBDC Senior Counselor, the mission of the centers is to provide information to make pre-start-up, start-up or existing businesses successful. That information includes advice on maintaining cash flows, determining the feasibility of a new business, developing business plans, marketing and time management.

"Generally, companies that are willing to seek advice are going to be more open to change."

Ray Laughter, Executive Director of the college district's Center for Business and Economic Development

> Henry said many people who want to start a small business "don't have goals; they only have ideas." The district's SBDCs try to help entrepreneurs determine if their ideas are feasible and how much competition they are

likely to encounter.

U.S. Rep. Jack Fields of Humble is a strong supporter of SBDCs. "By providing start-up businesses with the information, technical assistance and day-to-day guidance they need to succeed, and by helping existing businesses expand and penetrate lucrative new markets, Small Business Development Centers play an integral role in creating new jobs, developing new products and boosting our nation's economy," Fields says.

"I believe strongly in the value of our nation's SBDCs and in the dedication, pro-

fessionalism and knowledge of the men and women who staff them."

SBDC counselors say there are no shortcuts to making a new business successful.

"Whoever works the hardest is usually the most successful," says Gordon Findlay, a Business Counselor at North Harris College's SBDC. Henry says the success formula for a start-up business is the "7/24 rule" — working seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

SBDC business counselors say that a key to starting or maintaining a successful business is thorough research and planning. The district SBDC counselors can refer clients to library resources at each of the college learning resource centers or to the University of Houston Lead Center downtown, which contains a myriad of business research resources.

Counseling that the SBDC provides is making a positive economic impact. The University of Houston's SBDC, of which NHMCCD's SBDCs are members, has been declared revenue neutral by the state controller's office — that is, the program generates at least as much money in taxes as is spent on the SBDC program.

"Impact studies show businesses that use our counseling services have a higher success rate than businesses that don't," Ray Laughter, Executive Director of the college district's Center for Business and Economic Development, says. "Generally, companies that are willing to seek advice are going to be more open to change."

One of the advantages of receiving business counseling from SBDCs is that they provide honest, objective evaluations. "When we meet with a company, we have no built-in bias," Laughter says. "We can take an objective look and give the businesses solid advice that will help their bottom lines."

Laughter believes a key reason for the success of the district's SBDCs is the extensive business experience of the centers' counselors. While some SBDCs hire recent M.B.A. graduates, all of NHMCCD's business counselors have at least 20 years of business development experience. "Our counselors have been where their clients are now," Laughter says.

The fact that there are SBDCs at each of the colleges in the district reflects NHMCCD's philosophy of serving the people whose tax dollars support the district. Says Laughter: "We're community based and we care very much about providing service to the community."



Message from the chancellor

Dr. John E. Pickelman

Scholars Awards celebrate excellence

HENORTH HARRIS Montgomery Community College District has tremendous benefits to offer the northern Houston corridor, and we want as many people as possible to know about our colleges.

It was for this reason that the NHMCCD Foundation, in conjunction with Sun Newspapers, established the Scholars Awards for Excellence. The Scholars Awards recognize the contributions to our area by 10 outstanding individuals in the fields of science, medicine, community design and development, humanitarianism, community service, education, cultural enrichment, law, government, and business and industry. I had the privilege, along with Roger Galatas, President of The Woodlands Corp. and the NHMCCD Foundation, and Ray Blume, CEO of Sun Newspapers, of presenting the awards in a series of five receptions at North Harris College's Grand Foyer and Gallery, between Oct. 5 and Nov. 16.

More than 550 community leaders in the 10 fields gathered in a series of meetings at the District Office to nominate and select the award recipients. The meetings and receptions allowed us to get to know these community leaders better, and gave them an opportunity to learn more about the myriad of educational opportunities our college district provides. We would like community leaders to think of Houston's northern corridor as one, united learning community, committed to the educational and economic betterment of all area residents.

The Foundation plays an important role in helping to fund the outstanding programs in the district and expand our horizons. Yet, we believe before we engage in fund-raising, we must engage in friend-raising. From the many positive letters we have received from those who attended the receptions, we know these awards contributed mightily to those efforts. As the administration and faculty of NHMCCD continually strive toward excellence, we want to thank everyone who helped make the first Scholars Awards for Excellence a rousing success. *

rofiles

Business Training Representatives Center for Business and Economic Development

North Harris College



Carol Burnett

Education: B.A. in Psychology from the State University of New York at Buffalo (SUNYAB); B.A. in Human Services from SUNYAB; M.Ed. from SUNYAB.

Hometown: Camden, N.Y.

Background: Burnett has worked as a training consultant for six years at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario. She also served as director of orientation and director of student services for the State University of New York at Buffalo. Burnett was the director of student activities at Daemon College in Buffalo, N.Y.

Started at NHMCCD: June 1993.

On her job: "Sound training will not just happen. It must be carefully planned, implemented, supervised and evaluated. I look forward to working with companies in our community to assist them in the identification of their needs, and to execute sound training endeavors."

Tomball College and Montgomery College



Pam Stanley

Education: B.A. in Political Science and History from Northern Illinois University; M.B.A. from the University of Toledo.

Hometown: Chicago, Ill.

Background: Prior to joining NHMCCD, Stanley was the director of economic development in the Youngstown, Ohio area for a three-county economic development organization. Past positions include industry retention specialist, Monroe County Industrial Development Corp.; project administrator, Teledyne; and high school social studies teacher, Downers Grove, Ill.

Started at NHMCCD: May 1992.

On her job: "In today's global economy a highly skilled and motivated workforce is critical to the success of any enterprise. Community colleges have historically helped to prepare and upgrade people's skills in preparation for workplace assignments. This need will only intensify over the next decade."

Kingwood College



Pat Chandler

Education: B.S. in Business Education, Auburn University

Transference

Hometown: Auburn, Ala.

Background: Chandler worked for 13 years in human resources at Tenneco. She also has eight years of experience in a variety of industries, including banking, accounting, law and hotel/motel management.

Started at NHMCCD: April 1993.

On her job: "Being a longtime Kingwood resident has helped me make business contacts very quickly. The various business-related programs of Kingwood College

that I market aren't hard to sell because they're structured to benefit the unique needs of a company. Also, Kingwood College has an excellent reputation within the community."

It takes some class to become certified as a designer



Photo by LaNae Ilseng

Kingwood College students (from left) Erin Phinney, Marty Ziebarth and Matt Dupler discuss various interior design techniques.

INGWOOD COLLEGE HAS designs on state certification for its interior design graduates. The Texas Legislature has recently passed a title act outlining minimum requirements for individuals wishing to call themselves "Interior Designer," and Kingwood College can help prospective designers meet those requirements.

"These minimum requirements are necessary to protect the public," says Nancy Lickson, Kingwood College's Interior Design Program Coordinator. "Clients need to be assured that their interior designer has a knowledge of important regulations such as fire codes and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) codes."

According to Mae Crow of the Texas Board of Architectural Examiners, requirements for state certification include a combination of education and experience totaling six years, plus successful completion of an examination.

Kingwood College's interior design program, which includes such courses as history of interiors, textiles and computer-aided drafting for interior design, fulfills the educational component of the certification requirements. The college's program also includes an internship program which provides opportunities for students to work with prominent professionals throughout the area.

The state regulations do allow interior designers who were practicing prior to Sept. 1, 1991 to be "grandfathered in" upon completion of six years of experience without taking an examination

Several Kingwood College interior design graduates have been certified, including Marion O'Brien, an interior design consultant with Reeves Antique Furniture. O'Brien had been operating a window treatment business from her home when she decided to look for new challenges. Her interest in obtaining a degree in interior design was piqued when she took some computer courses

and an interior decorating course through the college's Community Education division.

An independent consultant at Reeves Furniture, O'Brien assists customers in choosing furniture, fabrics and designs, and arranges displays for the show room. She also writes historical descriptions of the furniture. "I especially enjoy that aspect of the job because one of my favorite courses at Kingwood College was 'History of Interiors,' " she says.

The "History of Interiors" class teaches the architectural motifs and furniture characteristics of different time periods from ancient Egypt to the 1960s and covers the historical and sociological influences on furniture. "This knowledge is very beneficial to me, so I can identify pieces as they come in," O'Brien says.

Kathleen Voit, another recently certified Kingwood College graduate, says she has loved interior design "ever since I was a child playing with doll houses." As an adult, her friends were so impressed with the way she decorated her own home that they asked her to decorate theirs. This eventually worked into a business.

"As my business grew, I realized I needed to know more about the technical aspects of design," she says. "I enrolled in Kingwood College as one of the first interior design students when the program opened in 1986." She took classes part time while running her business, DBK and Designs.

Voit is excited about a new venture she started in September, a retail store in Spring called Design Design, Inc. The store sells gifts and accessories and offers design services. She says she also plans to hold decorating seminars. Fellow Kingwood College graduates Stephanie Bauer and Theresa Carlson will join her in the business. Voit adds that she will happily offer internships to current Kingwood College students.

Interior design program fulfills educational requirements

The fine arts find a home in north Houston

ESTLED IN THE piney woods of north Houston is a virtual harvest of cultural opportunities. At North Harris College, fine arts students hone and showcase their talents – and enjoy cultural enrichment with the surrounding community. Theater productions, musicals, concerts, gallery exhibitions and nationally recognized guest-artist lectures are all part of the program.

Last year, the college welcomed Pulitzer-prize-winning author Gwendolyn Brooks for a poetry reading. Brooks, who got her start in the community college system, has earned 70 honorary degrees and penned more than 20 books. She read to a standing-room-only crowd, staying long after to meet and talk with admirers.

What's more, the college choir took center field at an Astros baseball game, and this summer, the college created a community chorale.

Year after year, the forensics team earns top honors at state and national competitions. Last year, in fact, North Harris College placed 12th among 1,224 community colleges and 82nd among *all* two-year and four-year colleges and universities in the country — beating out Harvard University.

What draws such talent? "It's simple," explains Deborah Ellington, Fine Arts Division Head. "Top students come because of our reputation — we consistently earn national and state awards for forensics, drama, art, band and choir. Our faculty are experts, offering hands-on, personalized training. Our classes are small, so students get the attention they need to develop their talents."

In October, the college hosted the American College Theatre Festival, featuring eight full-length productions, free to the public.

The gallery draws artists from all corners — bringing paintings, mix media, sculptures, jewelry, drawings, installation art, computergenerated art and pottery to north Houston. Two nationally recognized artists lectured this fall, kicking off month-long exhibitions. Installation artist Hugh Merrill used the entire gallery, from floor to ceiling and corner to corner, to create a riveting environment of related works. Artist Don Reitz took the wheel with a ceramics exhibition, guest lecture and day-long workshop. The Smithsonian Institution recognized Reitz as one of America's best known studio potters.

"North Harris College provides one of the finer art galleries in the metropolitan area and the *only* juried gallery in north Houston," says Sandy Shugart, College President.

The college also features a 350-seat theater, as well as an arena theater, state-of-the-art dance studio with a floating wood floor, acoustical-control walls and ceiling and custom-designed audio system. There are band rehearsal halls and a ceramics facility and studios with floor-to-ceiling windows providing plenty of natural light.

The arts take center stage again this year, with a variety of offerings. In early 1994, the Dallas Black Dance Theatre returns to perform for the general public (Jan. 22) — and host

student workshops. An outdoor sculpture show emerges this January in the courtyard and will continue standing through spring. In February, art-Richard ist Davison Jr. presents an exhibition of mix media and drawings (Feb. 1-26), and a juried student art show will take place March through April 20. The drama program will present an evening of oneact plays (Feb. 23-26), and on (May 4-7), an Alan Ayckbourn farce "Taking Steps."

When not at practice or per-

forming on campus, the instrumental and choral ensemble have performed at galas and events throughout the metropolitan area. Visitors can also catch these performers in lunchtime concerts in the courtyard, as well as theater concerts all year long.

Admission to the gallery and most fine arts events is free. Ticket prices for drama productions are \$5, with discounts for students and older adults. "Our goal is to make the arts accessible to people of diverse means and backgrounds," Shugart says. "This opens cultural experiences for our community."

For a copy of the college fine arts calendar, call 443-5640.



Photo by Deborah Spenella

Drama students
Tim Davis, left,
and Andrew Lowry
in NHC's
production of
Wiley and the
Hairy Man.

Spectrometer takes chemical 'fingerprints' in seconds

OMBALL COLLEGE'S CHEMISTRY Department has an instrument that has done for organic chemistry analysis what the Concord jet has done for transportation.

Introducing the Nicolet Impact 400, a state-of-the-art Fourier transform infrared spectrometer, which performs chemical analysis in a fraction of the time it used to take to do the job. In essence, what the \$19,000 instrument does is use a beam of infrared light to take a "finger-print" of a chemical compound, such as caffeine.

The fingerprint's image is shown on a computer screen, allowing instructors to compare students' chemical compounds with those known to be correct.

"Basically, all molecules — like people — have 'fingerprints' that are specific for each molecule," explains Jim Pelezo, Tomball Col-

lege Chemistry Instructor. "The laboratory program in organic chemistry can now identify chemical reactions more easily and quickly."

The "old fashioned" way of proving a chemical compound was correct was by painstaking "wet" methods, or chemical reactions, which could take several hours, according to Pelezo. The college's new spectrometer can perform that work in 30 seconds, says Dale Tucker, a sales executive for Nicolet.

Despite its complex-sounding name, students find the instrument surprisingly easy to use and obtain data from, according to Pelezo.

"Students pick up on its operation very quickly and within a few minutes are actively collecting and comparing data on their own," he says. "Once they have tried the FT-IR, the students never want to go back to the wet methods of analysis."

Pelezo explains that students mix a chemical compound, then evaporate it. They place the compound on a special type of slide, which fits into the spectrometer, where the compound is "photographed" by the beam of infrared light.

Pelezo believes the new instrument will help the college draw students who will eventually transfer to a four-year university or college and major in such disciplines as chemical engineering, medicine and dentistry. "This allows us to be competitive with university-level infrared spectrometry," he says.

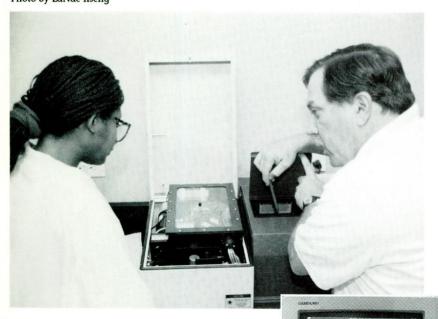
Infrared spectrometry is used widely in industry to perform such tasks as quality control checks, research of competitors' products, blending oils, manufacturing pharmaceuticals, studying molecular structure, studying reaction kinetics (or speeds of reaction) and forensics research.

A good example in the latter application is an automobile paint-chip library. "If there was a hit-and-run victim and a paint chip from a car was found on the victim's clothing, the type and color of car that hit the victim could be found using the library," Tucker says.

While the infrared spectrometer helps the students academically, it is the experience students gain using the instrument, which they later can use in industry, that Pelezo is most excited about.

"The spectrometer gives us a new dimension in organic chemistry," Pelezo says. "Students usually get academic and chalkboard chemistry, but now they are gaining practical experience in instrumental chemical analysis. Students who learn to use the FT-IR will be able to better compete in the technical job market."

Photo by LaNae Ilseng



Chemistry Instructor Jim Pelezo instructs student Rhoda Strong in the use of Tomball College's new Impact 400 Fourier transform infrared spectrometer. The inset photo displays the result of their work: a "fingerprint" of a chemical compound displayed in graphical format on a computer monitor. Mastery of such

equipment allows a technician to perform chemical analysis of a compound — a task which once took several hours using basic chemical testing — in as little as 30 seconds.

Lab helps students reach their limits — and beyond

ONTGOMERY COLLEGE PRESIDENT Bill Law has long believed it's important to support students' learning outside the classroom, but even he could not have anticipated the overwhelming success of the college's academic support laboratory at Conroe Center.

In a two-week period in September alone, nearly 1,100 students checked into the lab, spending nearly 1,400 hours studying. Although some students checked in to the lab more than once, the 1,100 total is especially significant, because it exceeds the total number of students registered for credit courses.

"For an initial response, we've struck a chord," Law says. "What we're seeing is that the student and faculty response to our instructional philosophy is exactly what we had hoped for."

The demand for space in the lab, which includes computers, textbooks and a variety of other study materials, has prompted extended Saturday hours. Law is also exploring the possibility of opening the lab on Sundays during the last half of each semester, when students are preparing for final exams. The strong response has also prompted Law to modify staffing plans in the new Montgomery College lab to meet the expected student demand.

Although the lab was open during Conroe Center's first semester of operation last spring, it was not always staffed with instructors. Law has fulfilled a major goal by keeping the lab staffed full time this semester.

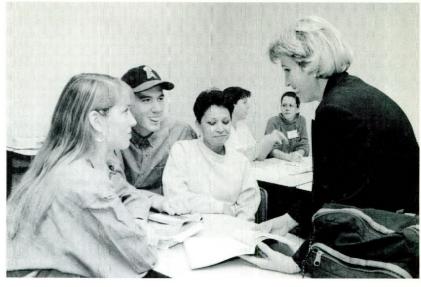
"Students need personal reinforcement," he says. "Where you make technology available to people, you must also make people available to people."

The college's students echo that sentiment.

"If you're there doing homework that can
possibly be difficult," says student Meridith
Storms, "you have someone to turn to. It could
be an instructor or another student."

Law estimates that as many as 50 percent of the college's students need help in reaching college-level proficiency in at least one subject, underscoring the importance of the lab. He also notes that changes in the TASP test mean that a higher percentage of students need to sharpen their mathematics skills.

Says Law: "We're trying to be very up front in realizing that not everybody can be successful or can learn all they're going to learn by attending class three times a week for 50 minutes."



Half of Montgomery College's students are enrolled in evening courses, indicating a significant number of people with full-time jobs who need convenient access to learning help. "It's critically important to break down the barriers of time and space regarding student learning," Law says.

The lab has motivated students not only to reach minimum requirements, but to go beyond, Law says. "While a few students may need a push," Law says, "there are many more students who, when shown the way, will take great responsibility for their own development."

The lab is divided into two areas: a "quiet" room with computers where students study individually and a group-study room. Each room is staffed by an instructor, says Karen McConnell, the Academic Support Lab Coordinator.

Developmental course students are the major users of the PLATO 2000 computer software system, which includes basic through advanced instruction in such subjects as reading, writing, mathematics, life-coping skills, parenting and job-search skills.

"The computers are very user-friendly," McConnell says. "The students have their name and code stored in the computers, so they can go into the system any time and resume work."

The lab also includes a wide range of videos on such subjects as writing composition, study skills and test-taking anxiety. There are also textbooks and practice exercises for a variety of subjects.

Says student Maria Koukas, who uses the PLATO software to sharpen her mathematics skills: "PLATO is fun and challenging, and it lets you know where you stand with your learning. I think the learning lab is great, period."

A side benefit of using PLATO software is that it helps students become "computer literate," says Doris Fontaine, a part-time English instructor who sometimes staffs the lab.

Student René Franklin summed up the importance of the lab for herself and other students. "Without the lab and the instructors, I'd be at home trying to figure things out myself."

Conroe Center Academic Support Lab Coordinator Karen McConnell, right, helps students (from left) Robin Rogers, Jason Goodwin and Rose Mary Moreno brainstorm a writing project. In the background, math tutor Claudia Davis, left, and English tutor Tracy Bilsing await student inquiries. Tutors are always available in the lab.

Freebies

Continued from page 1

College Learning Resource Center. "If we don't have a book or reference material, we can usually refer you to someone who does."

It can cost a family of four more than \$20 to attend a movie and more than twice that amount to go to an Astros game. But North Harris, Kingwood and Tomball Colleges offer a number of no-cost drama and music performances featuring top-notch, wholesome entertainment.

North Harris College's jazz band, pop singing group and drama team have all taken top honors in recent regional contests. "People have the opportunity to see some of the best entertainment in the Gulf Coast region. I guarantee that," says Joe Kaough, North Harris College Drama Instructor.

"We strive to offer diverse entertainment that appeals to families and members of our community," says Debbie Ellington, Fine Arts Division Head. "We are bringing culture from all over the country to our corner of the world."

And finally, like the famous board game Monopoly but unlike most universities, NHMCCD colleges offer free parking. That benefit alone makes college more accessible and less expensive.



North Harris Montgomery Community College District

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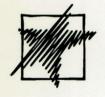
to inform the community-at-large of all the great things happening in the North Harris Montgomery Community College District.

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