



# Alumni PRIDE

LaGuardia Community College/CUNY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Fall 2003

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## Alumni Association Awards Four Scholarships

by Anthony Pappas, First Vice President



At the Honor's Night reception: Alumni Association President Sergio Villaverde and Vice President Anthony Pappas (center), flanked by scholarship recipients Yevgeniya Przhebelskaya (left) and Mamdouh Mobarak (right).

LaGuardia Community College Alumni Association awarded four scholarships to LaGuardia Students.

Due to the many worthy applications received it was extremely difficult to select the winners. Requirements included: College & Community Service, and a minimum GPA of 2.75.

Applicants were required to submit a letter of recommendation from a faculty member along with a short personal essay. The four students chosen this year to receive the \$500-scholarship were: Ranya Abbas, Aida

At this year's Honors Night, held on September 18, the members of the Executive Board of the

Sofia Carreno, Mamdouh Mobarak and Yevgeniya Przhebelskaya.

see SCHOLARSHIPS, page 5

## LaGuardia Launches College Foundation for Fundraising

The College recently announced the establishment of the LaGuardia Community College Foundation. Its purpose is to cover college expenses not covered by revenue from tuition, the city and the state. Funds raised will be used for a variety of purposes, ranging from scholarships for students, faculty support, and program development to capital development for new and renovated facilities.

The Board of Directors consists of business, civic and college leaders who all share a strong commitment to higher education in general and LaGuardia Community College, in particular.

The Directors are: Napoleon Barragan, founder of 1-800-Mattress; Scott Chao, financial advisor of Morgan Stanley; Peter L. DiCapua, Chief Operating Officer of Atco Properties; John Fellin, owner of Bruno's On The Boulevard in Jackson Heights; Lily Gavin, owner of Daizie's Restaurant in Sunnyside; Peter Koo, owner of Starside Drugs in Flushing; Robert C. Morgan, partner in the law firm of Fish & Neave; Robert E. Reiner, banker and former President of Doral Bank; Marianne Matanic-Spikes, Creative Director of the Urbanworld Film Festival, Carmen R. Velasquez, a Jackson Heights attorney. Directors representing the college are Dr. Gail O. Mellow, President,

see FOUNDATION, page 3

# Alumni Association President: Sergio Villaverde



Sergio Villaverde is a true success story. LaGuardia Community College is proud to have played a role in the discovery and realization of his potential, for which he is now giving back to his New York community.

Mr. Villaverde grew up in a disadvantaged neighborhood of the Bronx in New York City. He attended under-funded public schools throughout his childhood and even had to repeat one grade. No member of his immediate family had ever attended college. He didn't know what the S.A.T.s were, so he didn't take them. In fact, had it not been for

his high school girlfriend who one day suggested that they "go over to a LaGuardia Open House," he never would have considered college an option.

As a LaGuardia student in the late '80s, Mr. Villaverde was an active participant in student government, including the student protests against CUNY tuition increases. He was concurrently working as a member of the United States Coast Guard Reserve and an Emergency Medical Technician, where he received three Lifesaving Awards and delivered 18 babies (all girls!) This early interest in government and improving his

*see VILLAVERDE, page 3*

## 9/11 and Beyond at LaGuardia

*by Marie Cimino Spina, Library and Media Resource Center*

*"The war we have to wage today has only one goal and that is to make the world safe for diversity". U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations 1962-1972.*

*On international tolerance. Dag Hammarskjold Memorial Lecture presented Columbia University. January 1964*

That awful day could be viewed as the end of a way of life. Certainly the U.S. had been at war before. Embassies, installations and the world's innocent people have been attacked everywhere on earth. When the sky rumbled and ground shook within our borders, within our own city, peace and reasonable security were no longer the premise on which to base all actions. Suddenly the fears and suffering endured by so many in the world were ours.

New York is unique and LaGuardia a unique place within the City. Our reactions and rededication, despite personal and shared losses to our College community, are testimony to our commitment to cooperation, standards of respect for positive human potential, our ability to pursue our goals in difficult times, and our longing to embrace all people in a common quest for personal and community excellence.

On that Tuesday, theoretically the College closed. Because of confusion and a



temporary shut down of transportation, parts of the college and the Library remained open to welcome and provide refuge for students and others who were trying to rest on long walks home. Traffic outside moved heavily, sometimes not at all. Those of us who had students, friends or family working or living near the Trade Center tried to get some news and strands of hope from the TV monitors

and radios set up on campus. Some of us cried and some were angry. There was some confusion and fear, certainly, but there was camaraderie and support too.

On September 12, we moved through air thick with acrid smoke throughout the city. We found it hard to breathe in the clouds of

*see BEYOND 9/11, page 5*

## Villaverde *from page 2*

community would continue to develop in years to come. In 1990, Sergio graduated from LaGuardia with an Associate Degree in Liberal Arts, making the Dean's List and receiving Distinguished Leadership Awards.

After transferring his LaGuardia credits to one of our CUNY four year colleges, Mr. Villaverde earned his B.A. in Political Science from City College of New York in 1993, graduating cum laude. As a student there,

he continued to work for the Coast Guard Reserve and started working as a Police Officer for the NYPD, where he won several Integrity and Meritorious Service Awards. In

1993, he also began a four-year term as Chairman of the Board of Directors for Bronx Youth Services, a not-for-profit drug prevention program that provided educational and sports opportunities for 1500 local teenagers during his term.

His educational aspirations were still not quite fulfilled. In 1996 he earned his J.D. from Fordham University School of Law and was recognized as a Stein Scholar in Public Interest Law and Ethics. As always, he had worked his way through school. In 1995 he received dual promotions: to a Law Specialist at the Coast Guard Reserve and to a Training Officer for new Police Academy graduates in the NYPD.

He passed both the New York State and New Jersey bars on the first try. After spending two months in 1997 in the Gulf of Mexico with the Coast Guard as a Planning Officer for International Anti-Narcotics

Operations, he opened his own Law Offices in his Bronx neighborhood.

As a civil law attorney, Mr. Villaverde represents the interests of his community—many of whom are not fully aware of their rights and options, as he was not as a young Bronx teenager. He demonstrates a strong commitment to local and national youth in his active participation in the City College Latino Alumni Group, the U.S. Coast Guard



*Left to right, SGA representative Vbanessa Victoria, Alumni Association First Vice President Anthony Pappas and President Sergio Villaverde.*

Reserve, where he received Achievement Medals for work during one of the biggest peacetime maritime operations in history (Operation Sail 2000); in Community Board Number 7 of the Bronx, where he works

to improve community development and environmental issues; as an adjunct professor at Lehman College, where he has personally mentored and inspired several disadvantaged minority students to apply to Law School; and as a coach for a Bronx Junior High School Mock Trial Program which was developed to show inner city children their career options within the legal profession (After only 3 years, his team made it to the finals!).

But at no time has his commitment to the city and country been more evident than it was on September 11, 2001. He started out the day campaigning for primary day but, within minutes of the terrorist attacks, was serving as a member of the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve and ordered to Ground Zero. In the subsequent months he was responsible for helping coordinate the defense of New York City's harbor.

## Foundation *from page 1*

Dr. John P. Bihn, Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Richard Elliott, Vice-President of Administration, Dr. Linda Gilberto, Vice-President of Adult and Continuing Education, and Jose Orengo, the Executive Director of the Foundation.

### Newest Board Members

On September 23, 2003 the Board elected the following new directors:

Ms. Tai-Nin Can Wang Founder and Vice-President of WAC Lighting Company. She has been a member, volunteer and officer in many civil and philanthropic organizations such as the Asian American Cross Cultural Association, the Chinese Cultural Association of Long Island Chinese School, Rotary Club-Chinese Gift of Life and the Lai Yin Chorus. In addition, Ms. Wang founded the Hope School at Hei Chon, China as well as the Haw-Gu Scholarship Program.

Mr. Larry Green, Owner of J.G. Electrical Installations, Inc., since 1991, is also a member of the National Electrical Contracting Association.

Mr. Charles Khym, Esq., Attorney for ten years with his own law office in Flushing, Queens, specializes in personal injury litigation. He has been a member and officer in many civil and professional organizations such as the Korean American Lawyers Association, the Korean American Youth Foundation, Community Board 7 and Friends of Channel 13.

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## Stressed Out?



**See page 4 to learn  
how to cope**

# Alumni Breakfast

by Maria Riggs

On Saturday, October 4, 2003, the Office of Alumni Affairs held its third annual Commencement Breakfast in honor of the Graduates of the Class of 2003 in the E-Building Atrium.

The speakers included Peter G. Jordan, Vice President, Enrollment Management and Student Development, Aida Sofia Carreno, One of the Four Recipients of the Alumni Scholarship, Sergio Villaverde, Esquire, President of the Alumni Association, and Maria Riggs, Director of Alumni and Community Outreach.



Graduates of the Class of 2003 were invited with guests to attend. Sixty graduates attended the breakfast. The door prizes included a \$18.00 gift certificate for the Van Dam Diner and three \$10.00 gift certificates to Barnes and Noble Bookstores. Engraved Alumni Association pens were distributed to the graduates as a memento along with a one-year complimentary membership to the Alumni Association.

# All About Stress

by Maria Riggs

Stress is your body's response to change. It's a very individual thing. A situation one person finds stressful may not bother someone else. Something that causes fear in some people, such as rock climbing may be fun for others. There is no way to say that one thing is "bad" or "stressful" because everyone's different.

Not all stress is bad. Speaking to a group or watching a close football game can be stressful, but they can be fun, too. Life would be dull without some stress. The key is to manage stress properly, because too much of it can result in health problems.

Stress can stem from how you see yourself and how you see the world. If you're a "Type A" personality – impatient, aggressive and competitive, you are at risk. Other personality types who are at risk are workaholic, procrastinator, super-responsible, self-critical and people pleaser. Situations that cause stress do not involve physical danger; they involve angry coworkers, dented fenders, feelings of inadequacy, impatient customers, burnt toast and cancelled car insurance.

According to the American Health Association, you can be healthier when you make changes in your lifestyle. Managing your emotions better may help because some people respond to certain situations in ways that can cause health problems for them. Others pressured by difficult circumstances might start smoking or smoke more, over eat and become overweight or develop high blood pressure. Finding more satisfactory ways to respond to stress will help protect your health.

Some symptoms of stress include:

- Lack of energy and motivation
- Everything seems like a task, even leisure-related activities
- Feelings of no progress
- Diminished sexual drive
- No creativity
- Impatience and irritability
- Troubled relationships
- Sleep disruption
- Loss of appetite
- Self-neglect

see *STRESS*, page 6

## ALUMNI UPDATE: Reo Gutierrez - Graduated June 2001



**Major:** *Computer Operations: Network Systems Administration Option*

**GPA:** *3.7 Deans List  
Graduated with Honors*

**Member:** *Phi Theta Kappa & LaGuardia Community College Research Team*

**Internships:** *MTV Networks: Group Field Technician, Hardware and Software Support Group; and LaGuardia Community College: Assistant Network Administrator, Technical Support Group.*

Mr. Gutierrez was placed as a part-time LAN administrator Assistant with the Trane Company, June 2001. The Trane Company had posted the position on an internally created web link on the LaGuardia Community College home page called Post-A-Job.

By September of 2003 due to his drive and competence in the position he was promoted to a full time LAN Administrator. Within one month, other employees began to consult him on their computer issues and entrusted him with new projects.

Mr. Gutierrez received an Achievement Award for Outstanding Service during the World Trade Center disaster, October 2001. He explains, "Immediately following the World Trade Center disaster on September 11th, all our T-1 lines, both data and voice, went down in our 3 offices in New York City. I set up a remote connection site in the Hauppauge office on Long Island using dial-

up connections in order to transmit data and receive resources from the Long Island City office. The CEO personally congratulated me for my accomplishments on the company's behalf, and as a token of his appreciation he gave me a gold pen".

On March of 2003, he received an MVP award for Customer Support Staff at the company's Annual Meeting. According to Mr. Gutierrez, working for The Trane Company has been a wonderful experience. "The job is challenging, pays great and the company offers so many opportunities for advancement. I am very happy and thankful to have found such a great job in my field".

While working full-time, Mr. Gutierrez is currently working towards his Bachelors at New York City College of Technology, CUNY in Brooklyn full time. He has both MCSA and CCNA certifications.

## Faculty/Alumni Spotlight



Dr. Lawrence Muller is an active member of the IEEE COMSOC and is currently serving as the director of the Center of New Media and Applied Technology at LaGuardia Community College. He holds a full professorship in LaGuardia Community College's Computer Information Systems Department, where he has been an instructor for 17 years. Professor Muller has taught a wide range of courses including computer programming and electronics. Aside from his teaching, he has practical programming experience as part of a development team working on PC game software. In the distant past, he worked as an aerospace systems engineer programming in Fortran. Dr. Muller holds an AS in pre-engineering, LaGuardia CC; BEE, Pratt Institute; M.S., Polytechnic University; M.Phil., Ph.D., CUNY.

### Scholarships *from page 1*

The Scholarship Committee continues to plan for next year's awards and looks for new ways to provide additional scholarships. If you are a dues paying member and you would like to join the committee and share your ideas, please call Maria Riggs, Alumni Office @ (718) 482-5040 or stop by room M-144.

### Beyond 9/11 *from page 2*

soot and dust that blew across Thomson Avenue. Traffic police wore makeshift masks and looked weary as they watched out for safety. Inside the buildings the TV monitors broadcast news and classes resumed. What we saw when we arrived in the E building was a memorial board in the lobby on which students and staff were invited to write their thoughts. There were occasional angry words but most echoed "whys" and sorrow and sympathy for the lost loved ones of others. One statement spoke of lost youthful happiness "September 11, 2001 - a birthday I will never forget." The board remained up and was added to for weeks.

On the 12th, the College held an open discussion in the MainStage theatre led by Dr. Richard Lieberman of the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives and Dr. Reza Fakhari and students. The then President of Student Government, Sabiha Ahmed, spoke eloquently about her sadness that some would equate this tragedy with her faith. Some people spoke of joy learning that a friend had survived. Others could not speak, as they thought about missing friends and classmates.

In the days that followed there were e-mails filled with left and right political rhetoric and emotional opinions and statements seeking peace and reconciliation; exhortations to light candles came from over the email listserves. Emotion was understandably high. This was a devastating event but students returned and resumed normal study as if to show that their future was not going to vanish by violence. A candle vigil was held on campus. As some of us left campus students handed us candles to take for our windows at home.

The news and notions stands near the number 7-train exit on 33rd Street sold out of tiny American Flags, peace buttons and votive candles.

A series of diversity workshops evolved from Faculty discussions about tension and nervousness in classes. This "teaching under a cloud" brown bag lunch session developed

into intercultural explorations enriching understanding and forging new friendships.

We grieved upon learning that a student, a young father interning at Cantor Fitzgerald, had perished. At graduation, which was postponed from September until October 20, 2001, his brave and beautiful wife accepted his diploma with honors. This spring the Korean Students Association held a benefit festival for that family at the college. We learned of a Port Authority policewoman and other members of the College's extended family who were lost. Some students were injured and others were distraught by being so close to the events. Faculty and classmates made special efforts to welcome them back and help them heal from their shock.

The Buddhist Nepalese students invited a Religious teacher to hold a prayer and reflections session on campus. Classes returned to normal although many did not know exactly how to teach in those first few weeks. There were worries over employment and some students worried about immigration status and a few withdrew for economic or other reasons. We all gasped on November 11, when a plane headed toward the Dominican Republic, crashed in Breezy Point. Like so many in the country, we felt a little queasy at our reaction of both sorrow and "almost relief" upon learning that it was an accident and not an attack. That turned into greater sorrow when learned one of our students perished in the crash.

Later in the Fall, members of the English department started the "Living Through History" project in collaboration with the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives. Students' work from the classes will be preserved in the college. The Library's Institutional Archives collected most e-mails and flyers and the memorial board, all of which are being preserved.

The Library Media Resource Center has developed a website to help students and faculty locate resources to promote

*see BEYOND 9/11, page 6*

## Stress *from page 4*

- Pains in your neck, shoulders or lower back
- Can't concentrate
- Irritable or depressed

Some of the best tips on how to manage stress are:

**Buy a calendar.** Set up a daily or weekly schedule for yourself, allowing time for class, study, leisure, exercise and any other activities that are important. Allow approximately two hours of study time for every hour of class. Remember that your schedule can be revised as commitments change.

**Keep a "To DO" list.** Prioritize your tasks and try to get the most important item done on time. Rewrite your list often.

**Do Physical Activity.** It is very important to pay attention to your physical health. Don't ignore the connection between mind and body.

**Learn relaxation techniques.** Take a stretch, get a massage or meditate. Close your eyes and think about your favorite place.

**Exercise.** Whether you prefer a daily routine of stretching or high-intensity aerobics, exercise lowers stress and gives you more energy for important tasks.

**Eat Healthy Foods.** Avoid food high in fat and cholesterol, limit sugar and control caffeine.

**Mental attitude** plays a major role in how we react to stress. Limit stress by controlling our reaction to daily challenges. Overcome negative thoughts. Consciously commend yourself to stop thinking specific negative thoughts.

**Don't sweat the small stuff.** Put issues that cause stress in perspective. Congratulate yourself when you accomplish a goal, no matter how small, be the first to congratulate yourself.

**Find Support.** During times of stress, it is important to find individuals and groups who will provide you with support. Develop a circle of friends who empathize with your current situation and can provide support and understanding.

**Laughter** lightens our load and provides us with energy to face difficult tasks.

**Seek help** – Personal Counseling (718 482-5250, Room C245) can provide you with strategies to reduce stress and to identify the sources of stress in your life.

## Beyond 9/11 *from page 5*

understanding what we continue to live through. It is called "September 11 and Beyond." <http://www.lagcc.cuny.edu/library>.

On September 11, 2002 the college commemorated the loss as well as hope for peace in the Mainstage Theater. The program included individual readings from the college community on "How have the events of 9/11, and their aftermath, impacted my life?" A memorial tree was planted in the Cobblestone Courtyard. This year on Sept 11, 2003 we lit candles as tables with flowers were set out in the Lobbies. We signed memorial books with our wishes for comfort to the bereaved in our country and all over the world. We signed to console, to comfort, to face a challenge to resist vindictive notions while we try to ensure a world in which peace is afforded a chance.

How has LaGuardia changed one and two years later? Like all of New York we are poorer from the loss of so many we loved. Economic downturns are a national and City concern affecting the college and students. On October 8th Tamin Ansary, the Afghan American writer who wrote the famous e-mail on 9/11 and who is the author of the Freshman Common Reading, *West of Kabul East of New York*, visited LaGuardia and talked about Afghan history, Islam and answered student questions. He was warmly received and his historic perspectives were welcomed.

At LAGCC men and women of all nations and faiths are working and learning and hoping together to create a better world, to create hope and opportunity for all beings in the way our college, LaGuardia, holds hope for us.

### LaGuardia Community College Foundation Awards 32 Scholarships to LaGuardia Students

Long Island City, NY--The LaGuardia Community College Foundation has recently awarded \$500 scholarships to 32 LaGuardia students. The new Foundation, made up of business leaders from Queens and Manhattan, has made fundraising for scholarships, a priority.

The America Rising Award, as the scholarship is called, is designed to help needy students meet the rising cost of tuition and books. Over 200 students who registered for the Fall 2003 semester applied for the scholarship.

"As a result of the foundation's efforts, the college can award the first installation of scholarships to students who are in need of financial assistance," said President Gail O. Mellow. "These monetary gifts enable the college to come to the aid of those students who might not be able to continue their studies without this financial boost."

She added "at LaGuardia Community College; a CUNY two-year institution, a students family income increases 17% upon graduation."





By Staff

A LaGuardia nursing student who has displayed exceptional dedication to the health field was honored with a student leadership award from the New York State Nursing Association.

Edward Ledbetter, a 2003 graduate who served as president of the nursing club and has actively performed community service, received the coveted award for displaying outstanding leadership skills and professionalism throughout his educational experience. The LaGuardian is one of two students from the state's two- and four-year programs to be recognized by the organization at a ceremony held in Rochester, N.Y., in October.

"No one deserves this award more than Edward," said Dr. Barbara Svitlik, director of the nursing program. "He exemplifies the ideal characteristics of the professional nurse—that blend of altruism and intelligence."

The 34-year-old South Ozone Park resident began his career in the health profession in 1986 when he enlisted in the army and received training as a medic.

During his stint in the army, he was transferred to the Landstuhl Army Medical Center where he volunteered to serve on the Contingency Response Team, a 14-member group, which responds to crisis situations. One mission took the team to Cameroon where he immunized and examined the local residents.

## LaGuardia Student Receives Prestigious Nursing Award

Returning to the states, Mr. Ledbetter was assigned to the Academy of Health Sciences in San Antonio, Texas where he became a licensed practicing nurse. Once he received his licensure, he worked at the Brooke Army Medical Center, which specializes in burns and trauma, and then went on to serve as a supervisor at a medical/surgical unit at Fort Ord in California.

In 1990, when the first Bush administration went into Iraq, the honoree volunteered to go to Riyadh to help set up the evacuation hospital.

Three years later, after being discharged from the army, he made a decision to become a registered nurse and enrolled in LaGuardia's nursing program.

From the start, Mr. Ledbetter established himself as a special student. Assessing his performance, Professor Pat Dillon of the nursing program said that Mr. Ledbetter was a student scholar and leader who displayed the rare qualities associated with those who go into the health profession. "Along with his compassion for others," she said, "Mr. Ledbetter was strong theoretically, and put all his efforts into making the most of his nursing abilities, while caring for his family and maintaining a strong involvement in his surrounding community."

At the college, he reached out to his classmates, sharing his lecture notes, conducting tutorials and study groups, and preparing them for higher level courses. He was also available to help recruit new students into the program and was called upon to represent the student body at numerous nursing conventions.

Mr. Ledbetter was also instrumental in working with faculty members to reinstitute the program's non-operational nursing club. Upon its reactivation, he was unanimously voted in as president, a position he held until he graduated.

Not quite understanding all the attention, a modest Mr. Ledbetter said, "I do not think that anything that I did was extraordinary. I believe in helping people. Anyone can do that."

His services also extend into the community. From 1998 to 2002, he worked at the Jamaica Hospital Medisys as a LPN in a family practice setting where he was responsible for triage, assessment, and treatment of patients.

He also served as a home care attendant with the Country Home Care and Visiting Nurses Association, a volunteer with Meals on Wheels, and did blood pressure assessment at adult day care facilities.

"Mr. Ledbetter is an exceptional individual," said Professor Dillon, "who puts all his efforts into every endeavor he undertakes."

With his associate's degree in hand, Mr. Ledbetter passed his licensing exam in August and now works in Elmhurst Hospital's emergency room, and will do so for a required one year before he begins his academic studies again. His game plan is to receive his bachelor's degree and, ultimately, obtain his master's in nursing anesthetics.

"LaGuardia is the first step toward my career goal," said Mr. Ledbetter.

*As part of his application for the award, Edward Ledbetter used his LaGuardia **E-portfolio**, an online portfolio which showcased his academic work, personal reflections, biography and resume. In its second year at LaGuardia, one of the only community colleges in the country to have it, **e-portfolio** represents LaGuardia's commitment to encouraging our students to use technology for personal and career exploration, and advancement.*

# Alumni Association Calendar of Events

Fall/Winter 2003/04

## October

4 Commencement Breakfast



## November

8 Workshop: Career Development & Resume Writing  
Free for Alumni Association Members/ \$10 for Non-Members

17 Alumni Association General Membership Meeting

18 City College - Center for Worker Education  
4-Year College Transfer Program  
Free of Charge



## December

10 Workshop: The Nuts and Bolts of Starting Your Own Business  
\$10 for Alumni Association Members/ \$15 for Non-Members

## January

20 Workshop: Microsoft Office: FrontPage - Create Your Own Webpage!  
\$10 General Admission

Check the Alumni Website  
for Event Details. [www.laguardia.edu/alumni](http://www.laguardia.edu/alumni)

