



ALUMNI

& F R E N D S

VOLUME 8 | 2022

Meghan Manary
Game & Parks Educator
Credits MPCC for
Success in Life (pg.12)





Greetings Alumni & Friends of Mid-Plains Community College,

I hope this year's letter finds you doing well. From the pages of this newsletter, you'll read about how our current and former students are taking their education and experiences from MPCC and making a difference in their communities, in their own lives, and in the lives of others including the 2022 Nebraska Teacher of the Year.

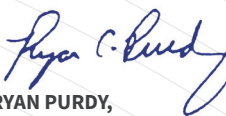
In the spring of 2022, MPCC requested and was granted approval from the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education to provide a new Associate of Applied Science degree in Agriculture with two emphases options in Diesel and Welding Technology. We invested in training equipment to begin offering Class A CDL training on site. The program has experienced immediate success and we've already expanded and hired a full-time trainer for the program.

We cut the ribbon on the much-anticipated, newly renovated Child Development Center in McCook, broke ground on the Health and Science Center expansion in North Platte, watched the completion of the new entrance to South Campus from Highway 83 and cut that ribbon this past month. This project has been several years in the making and has already received glowing reviews around the community from both students and the general public traveling to and from campus.

In April 2022, the Nebraska Legislature appropriated \$10 million to each community college from the American Rescue Plan Act. MPCC will utilize this funding for a portion of the North Platte Community College South Campus Health and Science Center Expansion, the renovation of the McCook Community College East Campus (formerly the Elks Club Building), and a new Electrical Technology building on the NPCC - North Campus.

Thank you all for your continued support of Mid-Plains Community College. We always want your input on how we can better serve you as we desire to continue to improve in all areas to sustain and grow our region.

Lastly, I'd ask that you consider giving back in return for what MPCC has done for you so together we can leave a lasting legacy for tomorrow.


RYAN PURDY,
MPCC President

WE ARE MPCC.

Greetings alumni & friends,



Much has happened at Mid-Plains Community College since the last edition of this magazine. A new feature to highlight in this edition is a class notes section; staying in touch with alums and connecting them with their fellow classmates is one of the most rewarding things our office does. I hope you find the addition of class notes as interesting as we do. To continue this section, we will need your input. Please send us your life successes, job changes, retirements, marriages, births, degrees earned, memorials, and more. Whether you are telling us about an event in your life or pointing us towards an event of another alum – we'd like to know about it. Information and story tips may be sent to alumni@mpcc.edu.



In addition to class notes, the Advancement Office has been continuing to update alumni records in the college database and working to catalog the current collection of MCC and NPCC yearbooks. As part of this endeavor, we have been preparing to host a nursing reunion for the class of 1985 and 1986. We have also heard from alums across the service area interested in attending reunions. We welcome any assistance with record-keeping that our alums can provide.

Across the MPCC campuses, many capital improvements have taken place. McCook Community College celebrated the ribbon cutting of the remodeled Child Development Center. In North Platte, ground was broken on the \$4.8 million Health and Science Center Expansion. In addition, on August 19, the Ogallala Campus celebrated ten years of serving the community with a brick-and-mortar presence. Many of these projects have taken private donations to accomplish; thank you to the donors for your support of these worthwhile improvements.

In my first year with MPCC, I've witnessed the dedication and support of alumni, community, and staff. The philanthropic support of scholarships, capital projects, and programs is second to none. Thank you. I look forward to continued work with alums and donors to establish their legacy through charitable giving. Thank you for helping make MPCC first choice!

Connect with us!



@mpccedu

JACOB RISSLER,
Director of Institutional Advancement
and Executive Director, NPCC Foundation



NAVAL CADET FINDS DIRECTION & PURPOSE THROUGH MPCC

Jesse Johnston - Jesse Johnston stands next to a Cessna 172 Skyhawk at Jack Edwards National Airport in Gulf Shores, Ala. where he went through flight training. The Mid-Plains Community College alum is living out his dream in the Navy.

JESSE JOHNSTON ('13) MAY BE FLYING HIGH NOW, BUT HE'LL NEVER FORGET WHERE HE CAME FROM – OR THE PATH THAT LED HIM TO WHERE HE IS TODAY.

"I've got so much love for Mid-Plains Community College," Johnston said. "The school and the instructors – they did so much for me."

As a child, Johnston never pictured himself at a community college or living in Nebraska for that matter. He wasn't sure where he wanted to be, really, he just knew he wanted to do something with aviation.

Originally from Ely, Nev., Johnston moved to the Hershey area with his family when he was 14, so that his father, Gene Johnston, could start a business. Jesse subsequently attended Hershey High School but dropped out his junior year to go to work.

"Eventually, I wanted to open some doors for myself, and I knew I would need an education for that," Jesse said.

His older brother, Rowdy Johnston, had attended MPCC in North Platte, and he encouraged Jesse to start there as well. Jesse heeded the advice and, in 2011, at the age of 19, earned a GED. By 2012, he was enrolled at Mid-Plains full-time.

"MPCC was affordable, close to home and allowed me to ease into the college environment slowly," Jesse said. "I needed that type of transition at that point in my life."

He also liked the fact that he could explore so many different career options with MPCC.

"At Mid-Plains, because of the affordability, I could dip my toes into an industry, learn the foundation of a skill and see if I liked it," Jesse said. "If you're making yourself better and working toward something, it doesn't matter where you start."

Jesse received the Science and Humanities Division Award from MPCC in 2014. That same year, he transferred his credits to the University of Nebraska – Lincoln in pursuit of an engineering degree.

He also joined the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, where he spent the next six years working as a generator mechanic.

He is currently going through training at Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida. Eventually, he would like to become a naval flight officer for a Growler squadron and fly in a Boeing EA-18G Growler. A specialized version of the two-seat F/A-18F Super Hornet, the Growler is the first newly designed electronic warfare aircraft produced in more than 35 years.

"I now realize that's attainable," Jesse said. "When I look back at how far I've come and the opportunities I've had, I realize it all happened because of Mid-Plains. Mid-Plains helped me believe in myself. I'll never forget that."

NPCC ALUM FINDS STRENGTH CONFIDENCE THROUGH FITNESS JOURNEY

JILLIAN HOOVER ('12) HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED.

The days of negative self-talk and self-imposed limitations are a thing of the past. Physically, mentally, emotionally – the weight is gone.

"A lot of what I went through had to do with the mental aspect," Hoover said. "I had to learn how to believe in myself and in the process rather than the results."

Hoover is a stay-at-home mom turned personal trainer. She's lost 67 pounds since she began her journey, but more importantly, she's gained health, confidence and a respect for what her body can accomplish.

"I'm more fit now than I was in high school," Hoover said. "That just goes to show that there are no limits to how far you can go."

Hoover has spent her whole life in North Platte. She was homeschooled through high school then turned to North Platte Community College – earning a GED there in 2010 before enrolling full-time.

By the time college graduation rolled around in 2012, Hoover and her husband were expecting their first child.

"I walked across the stage to accept my diploma and gave birth 10 days later," Hoover said. "I became a stay-at-home mom, and it wasn't long after that I realized I needed to make a lifestyle change."

With her husband in the military and deployed, Hoover slipped into a daily routine.

"I would go to my classes then come home and eat fast food," Hoover said. "That took a toll on every aspect of my life."

Having a baby put things in perspective, and Hoover began trying to take better care of herself.

"I wanted to be 'healthy for a mom,' whatever that meant," Hoover said with a laugh. "That was my starting point. Everything was sporadic at first. I didn't have any knowledge of nutrition or fitness, but I started working out at home to YouTube videos while my daughter was napping.

I ate peanut butter because I thought it had a lot of protein and ate Special K cereal because I heard that was good for people. I didn't even like Special K."

What she did like was how she felt, even with little changes. Hoover started reading every article she could find about nutrition and exercise.



She welcomed two more children in 2013 and 2016. By then, she had a different mindset in terms of working out during pregnancy.

"With my middle child, I realized I could continue moving," Hoover said. "I was more mindful of what I ate, and I knew what was safe and what wasn't."

Hoover developed a love for the human body and for the science behind proper nutrition, building muscle and moving to live – not just to look good but to feel happy and pain-free.

As she slimmed down and built muscle, others took notice. Hoover became certified as a personal trainer at the end of 2019, and by 2020, had her first clients.

"My goal was to be able to keep up with my kids," said Hoover. "Now I've built a body that is strong and healthy for anybody – not 'just a mom.'"

NEBRASKA TEACHER OF THE YEAR GOT HIS START AT

OF ALL THE THINGS LEE PEREZ ('03) IMAGINED HIMSELF BECOMING – TEACHER OF THE YEAR WAS NOT ONE OF THEM.

"I didn't really like school when I was growing up," Perez said. "In fact, I would even go so far as to say I hated it. I barely graduated from high school."

In the end, education chose him – whether he wanted it to or not.

Perez was named the Nebraska Department of Education's 2022 Nebraska Teacher of the Year in October – making him the first male, Latino and English as a Second Language instructor to receive the recognition.

"It's an amazing honor," Perez said. "There was a lack of diversity in the Teacher of the Year pool, and now I'm able to change that."

Perez teaches English as a Second Language to fifth through eighth grades

at Alice Buffett Magnet Middle School in Omaha. He is relatable to many of the young minds he's trying to influence.

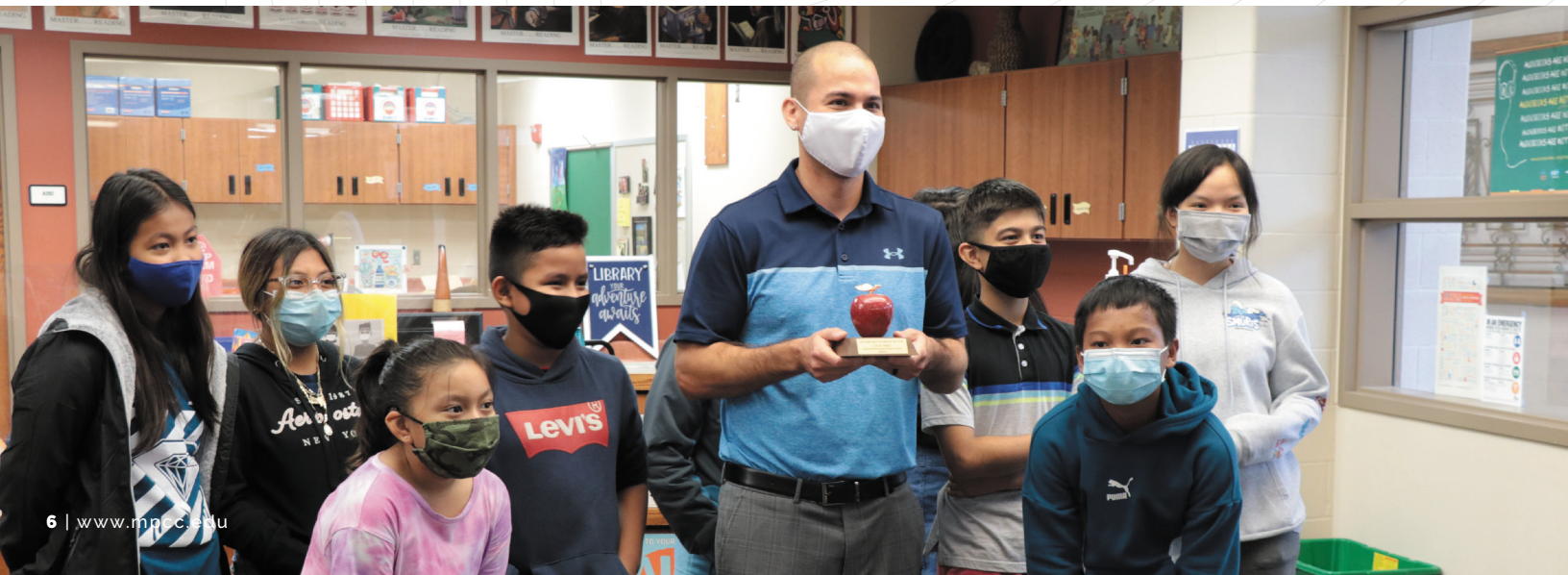
"My philosophy in the classroom is one of resiliency," Perez said. "I share my story. I tell my students I went through a rocky place, too. I know that a lot of things don't make sense now, but they will. The important thing is to not give up. I had mentors who didn't give up on me, who lifted me up and empowered me, and it's their impact that got me to where I am today."

Perez is the first to admit he saw no value in education in his younger days.

"I thought, 'This is so stupid. Why do I have to learn about equations or some dead guy who lived 200 years ago?'" Perez said. "I was lazy. It's not that I couldn't do the work, it's that I chose not to. I did the bare minimum and looked for every reason to not go to school. I graduated from North Platte High School in 2000 with a GPA of 1.88."

Going back to the classroom after that was the last thing he wanted to do, but it was what was expected of him.

"It was the encouragement of some key teachers, former North Platte head basketball coach Dan Moore and my brothers that got me to college," Perez said.



"Some of them thought I should go into teaching, and I thought, 'I don't even like education. Why would I want to be a teacher? Finally, I said, 'OK, I will try it so you guys will leave me alone.'"

He applied to one school, the University of Nebraska at Kearney, because that's where his brothers had gone, but was denied as a result of his grades. It was a devastating blow, but his family wouldn't let him give up, suggesting instead that he try community college.

"I enrolled in North Platte Community College, which was affordable and close to home," Perez said. "My first semester wasn't very good. In fact, I was on the verge of academic probation."

At that point, he was also second-guessing what he wanted to do with his life as his idea of becoming a kindergarten teacher wasn't turning out quite the way he had planned.

"Kindergarten teachers are amazing," Perez said. "I have so much respect for them. It takes a certain skill to do what they do, but after some job shadowing, I realized that just wasn't my thing."

He was considering dropping out until a conversation with Ruth Wohler, his advisor at the time, changed his mind.

"She basically sat me down and explained the harsh reality of what my life was going to be like if I continued to not put in any effort," Perez said. "I needed that. I needed someone to be honest with me and provide that guidance. I'm not sure it would have happened at a bigger school."

Perez vowed to do better, and from that point on, he did. He made it a point to go to class and focus on his assignments.

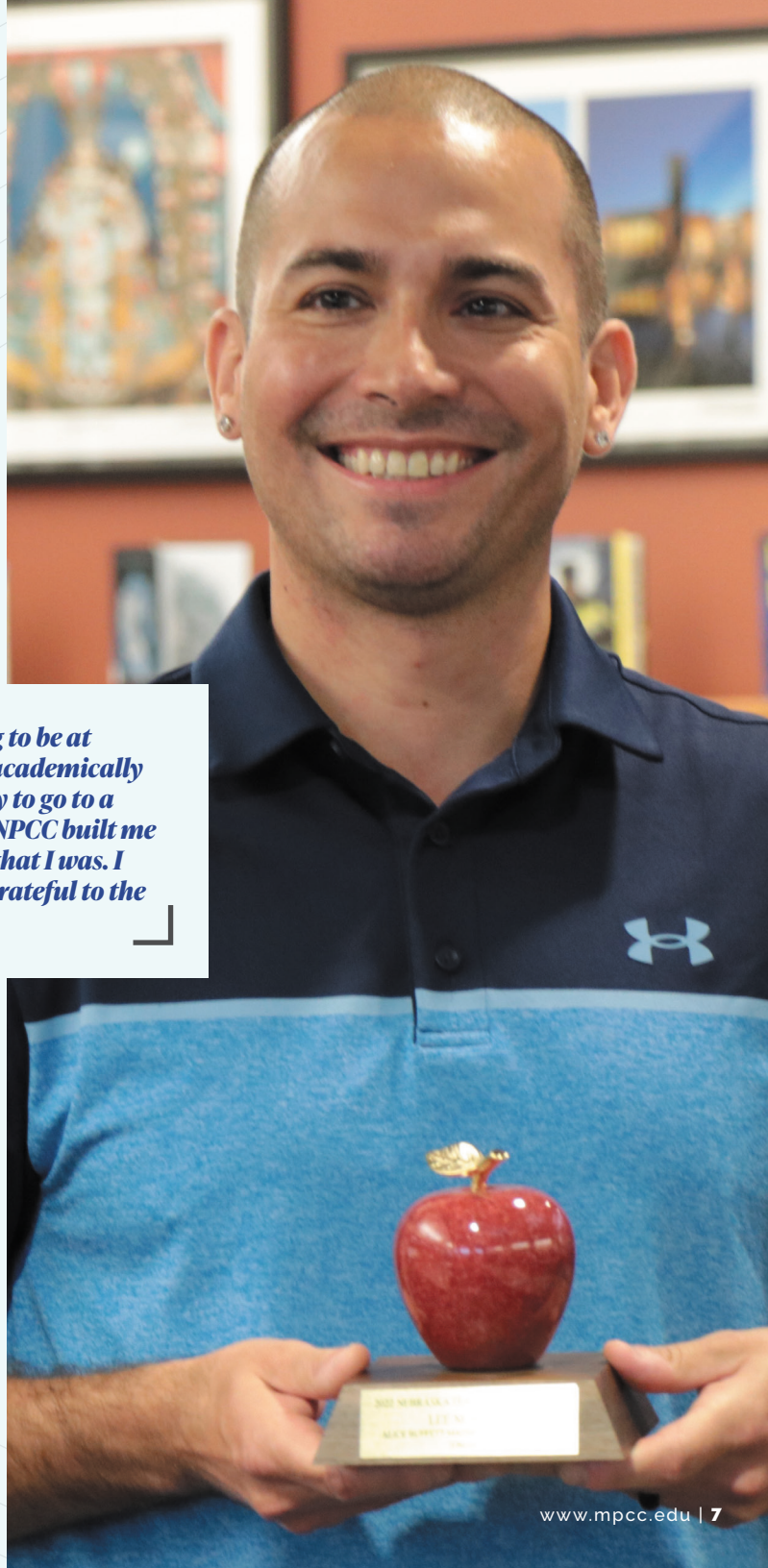
"I'm almost glad Kearney rejected me because if I would have gone there, I probably would have quit," Perez said. "It was a blessing to be at NPCC. I wasn't academically or socially ready to go to a university, but NPCC built me up to the point that I was. I will always be grateful to the college for that."

Perez relied a lot on the faculty at NPCC to get him through. In addition to Wohler, he found mentors in former psychology instructor Dr. Pete Johnson, history instructor Dr. Glynn Wolar and Kevin O'Connor, math instructor and head coach for the NPCC men's basketball team.

"It was a blessing to be at NPCC. I wasn't academically or socially ready to go to a university, but NPCC built me up to the point that I was. I will always be grateful to the college for that."

Perez and students – North Platte Community College alum Lee Perez is surrounded by his students as he accepts the award for Nebraska Teacher of the Year from the Nebraska Department of Education. (Photo courtesy of Omaha Public Schools)

Lee Perez – Lee Perez holds up his award for Nebraska Teacher of the Year. Perez is an alum of North Platte Community College. (Photo courtesy of Omaha Public Schools)





VINTAGE DRUMS BACK IN ACTION AT NPCC

A NORTH PLATTE COMMUNITY COLLEGE RELIC IS BACK AND LOOKING BETTER THAN EVER.

NPCC alum Kim Koch ('13) recently restored a Ludwig Vistalite drum set that had been sitting in storage at the college for decades.

"They're about 50-years-old," Koch said. "Just like with any collectible, there are little quirks to them, and a lot of care has to be taken when handling them."

The drums are a second-generation Big Beat Outfit – one of the most popular of the Vistalite kits Ludwig produced.

"In 1973, the Big Beat Outfit sold for \$795, and the matching snare drum was \$121," Koch said. "These days, an original kit like NPCC has will go for \$3,500-\$4,000 just for the drums."

According to World Collectors Net, the Ludwig Drum Company launched the Vistalite line in 1972 with six transparent colors: clear, blue, red, yellow, green

and the amber version that NPCC has. The shells were created by the Cadillac Motors plastics division, and the drums were produced at the main Ludwig factory in Chicago.

Their transparency visually enhanced the importance of the drummer and also played into the special effects lighting and dry ice fog frequently incorporated by rock bands of the time. The name Vistalite became known throughout the music world – thanks in part to their use by John "Bonzo" Bonham, the drummer for Led Zeppelin.

The acrylic shells have a tendency to shatter like a China tea pot if dropped. When Koch got his first look at the NPCC Vistalites, he was surprised at the condition.

"I told the music instructor she should feel very lucky," Koch said. "Those drums were constructed sometime between 1972 and '75 and, normally, when you find drums of that age, the weld seams on the shells are prone to spider cracking and chipping. I didn't find any cracking whatsoever – on the mounting points or

anything. They had a few scrapes here and there, but nothing that couldn't be polished up."

With college approval, Koch began the long and tedious process of repairing the Vistalites. The project took him approximately 41 hours.

"I reduced them to bare shells, replaced missing hardware, applied a special acrylic plastic cleaner to take all the oxidation and grit off the shells then hand polished all the chrome," said Koch.



One of the base drum hoops had a bad crack in it that had to be fixed and repainted with a lacquer coating, a missing leg was added and new heads were put on all the drums. After the cleaning and repair was done, Koch pieced everything back together and tuned the set up.

"I was able to bring the drums back to almost new, off the showroom condition," Koch said. "Maybe younger drummers will look at them and go, 'Those are really neat. I'm glad someone took care of them and brought them back to life'. That's fulfillment for me."

Kim Koch drums 1– Kim Koch plays the drums for the pep band at North Platte Junior College in 1971.

MPCC CAMPUSES

With **7** campuses
located across our service area,
you're always home at MPCC



FIND YOUR CAMPUS

McCook | North Platte | Broken Bow | Imperial | Ogallala | Valentine



NPCC HEAD VOLLEYBALL COACH EARNS 100TH CAREER WIN

NORTH PLATTE COMMUNITY COLLEGE HEAD VOLLEYBALL Coach Alexa McCall ('10) reached a significant milestone by earning her 100th career win.

The accomplishment came during the match against Northeast Community College Aug. 28, 2021 at the Northeast Volleyball Tournament in Norfolk.

She was presented with a commemorative volleyball for her efforts. The volleyball was signed by current team members who helped her achieve the 100th win.

"I try really hard to surround myself with good people," McCall said. "I also have had some great mentors. Mostly, the players that have been a part of this program make this job so rewarding and mean more than the wins."

McCall is in her eighth season as NPCC head volleyball coach. Originally from Sutherland, she played for the NPCC volleyball team from 2008-09.

McCall served as the assistant coach for the NPCC volleyball team in 2013 and 2014 prior to taking on her current roles as head coach and math instructor for the college.



GOLF TOURNEY YIELDS MORE THAN \$7,000 IN SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

A TOTAL OF \$7,440 WAS RAISED BY THE 2022 MCCOOK Community College Alumni/Community Golf Tournament July 9.

College employees and alumni joined community members at Heritage Hills Golf Course in McCook to play in the tournament and raise money for scholarships.

Proceeds from the event will go back to students planning to transfer to another college or university following their graduation from MCC.

The first flight of the tournament was won by Team Nothnagel. Team Samway and Team Morell were second and third, respectively.

Community Hospital won the second flight while Team Hoyt came in second and Team Stewart was third.



CHEER FOR YOUR TEAM!

NPCCKNIGHTS.COM

MCCINDIANS.COM

GAME & PARKS EDUCATOR CREDITS MPCC FOR SUCCESS IN LIFE



MEGHAN MANARY ('16) DOESN'T BELIEVE SHE WOULD BE WHERE SHE IS TODAY WITHOUT MID-PLAINS COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

"Mid-Plains was fantastic," Manary said. "I'm the school's biggest advocate. Mid-Plains prepared me for life."

The North Platte native is the Southwest regional naturalist and outdoor educator for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. The job allows her to live out her passion – sharing her knowledge and experience of nature with those around her.

Although she has a clear path in front of her now, that wasn't always the case. It took a while for her to figure out what she wanted to do and where she wanted to be.

"I didn't love high school and tried really hard to graduate early because of that," Manary said. "I ended up going through The Learning Center at North Platte High School, which allowed me to finish my classes in November of 2014 and start college early."

She began classes at MPCC in the spring of 2015 despite not officially receiving her high school diploma until several months later.



"I always thought I wanted to go to a university, but at that time, I was a little too young," Manary said. "I didn't feel like I was ready to move away from home at 17, and I wasn't in a rush. I decided to stay in town and feel things out. I had always heard great things about Mid-Plains, so I decided to give it a shot."

It didn't take her long to fall in love with all the opportunities Mid-Plains has to offer.

"I wanted to do everything," Manary said. "Almost every class I took – I considered making it my major. MPCC was a great option because it allowed me to explore many different interests while still earning transferable credits and not wasting money."

Manary made the President's List on multiple occasions before graduating from MPCC in 2017

with an Associate of Science degree. She transferred to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln armed with a newfound confidence and a sense of direction and purpose.

Manary majored in fisheries and wildlife management at UNL. She earned a bachelor's degree in 2019 and soon found herself drawing from her time at Mid-Plains again.

"While I was attending MPCC, Dr. Carla Long had put me in touch with Julie Geiser at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission," Manary said. "When it came time to look for a job, I used that connection to reach out to Julie to see if she knew of anything."

Geiser suggested a position in the parks division, and that summer, Manary accepted a job as a park naturalist for the Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park and State Recreation Area.

Then, thinking she wanted to do more with fisheries, Manary left Game and Parks in March of 2021 to become a fisheries research technician for the Nebraska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit.

Six months into the job, the Game and Parks department reached out to her.

"They said they were going to make a new position for me and that they wanted me to quit my other job and come back to work for them," Manary said. "I did, and I'm now the Southwest regional naturalist and outdoor educator."

In her spare time, she's also continuing her education.

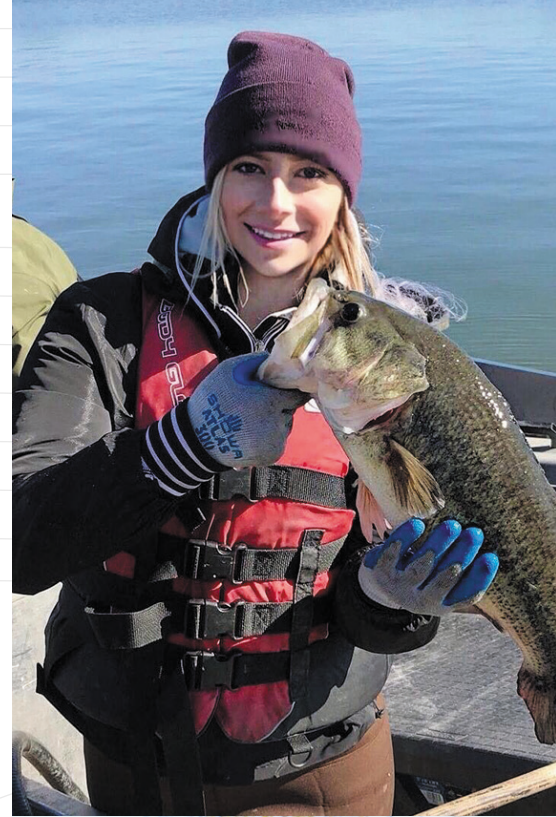
Manary is pursuing a master's degree in environmental education through Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

"MPCC was a great option for me because it allowed me to explore my many different interests while still earning transferable credits and not wasting money."

"Life has kind of circled around for me," Manary said. "Dr. Long put me in contact with Julie, and Julie is the reason I found a job at Game and Parks. It's all because of that initial networking at Mid-Plains. MPCC prepared me for more than I could have ever imagined. I will be forever grateful for the education I got, the connections I made and the instructors' passion that led me to where I am today."

Manary snakes - Meghan Manary holds up snakes as the Southwest regional naturalist and outdoor educator for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Manary fish - Meghan Manary holds up a catch while working as a fisheries research technician for the Nebraska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit.



79 RIDERS

MOTORCYCLE

16 classes in 2022 with 79 riders
up from 74 riders in 20 classes in 2021.

24 DRIVERS

CDL

4 classes to date with a total of 24 drivers.
All those completing the course have
obtained a job using their CDL.



A total of 202 riders
have completed the
43 classes offered so
far. Another 24 riders
will round out the
remaining four courses
scheduled through
October of this year.
All of which are full.



A total of 51 students
attended the first nine
Basic Rider classes
that were offered. By
January of 2021, the
decision was made to
increase the number
of classes to 20.
**Those also filled
immediately.**

8.75%



The Nebraska Department of Labor
predicts an 8.74% growth rate for the
industry. A total of 28,994 truckers
were employed in the state in 2016,
and that figure is expected to increase
to 31,529 truckers by 2026.





COMMUNITY COLLEGE SERVED AS "SPRINGBOARD" FOR PERKINS COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT

"I'm better off now than I ever thought I would be, and NPCC played a big part in that. It was the springboard on my path to success."

THE MAN WHO THOUGHT A HIGHER EDUCATION WASN'T IN THE CARDS FOR HIM IS NOW ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO GO ON AND PURSUE COLLEGE DEGREES.

Phillip Picquet ('95) is the superintendent at Perkins County Schools in Grant. He spent a lifetime building a career in the field of education, but it's not the profession he envisioned for himself originally.

"I was part of a single parent household," said Picquet. "We didn't grow up with a lot of money so I didn't think continuing my education was something I would be able to do financially. I just figured I would go into the military or start working after I graduated."

Fortunately for him, Picquet's guidance counselor had other plans.

"The ACT wasn't even on my radar," said Picquet. "But, my high school guidance counselor, Jean Church, noticed that I hadn't taken it. I didn't know much about the test, but she said, 'You're going to go to [North Platte Community College] and the ACT will be there. I don't know who paid for it, but it wasn't my family, so I can only speculate.'"

Picquet began his undergrad journey at NPCC.

"I appreciated the familiarity and one-on-one instruction of NPCC," Picquet said. "For me, coming from the mentality of 'I don't know if I'm going to be able to go to college,' it was a great stepping-stone. I really liked it. I don't know if I would have finished college if I would have started out in a bigger community."

After NPCC, Picquet transferred to UNK, graduating in 1999 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education with a Social Science 7-12 Teaching Field Endorsement. He then went on to earn a master's degree in secondary principalship.

Picquet became the Perkins County Schools superintendent eight years ago.

"When I was in high school, I wanted to better myself. I didn't want to live the way I had been, and community college helped me do that," Picquet said. "I'm better off now than I ever thought I would be, and NPCC played a big part in that. It was the springboard on my path to success."



FORTY AND EIGHT CREATES SCHOLARSHIP TO TRAIN FUTURE NURSES

Mid-Plains Community College nursing students now have additional scholarship funds available to them thanks to the Forty and Eight veterans organization based in Paxton.

In recognition of the hard work of nursing professionals, and to encourage the next generation of nurses to complete their education, the Voiture Locale #1068 Forty and Eight Military Organization established a Forty and Eight Military Nurses Scholarship through the North Platte Community College Foundation.

The Forty and Eight was formed in 1920 by American Legionnaires as an honor society, and from its earliest days, has been committed to charitable aims.

The name Forty and Eight is derived from the capacity of box cars in France during World War I, which could hold either 40 men or eight horses.

The Forty and Eight's purpose is to uphold and defend the U.S. Constitution, promote the well-being of veterans, their widows, widowers and orphans and to actively participate in selected charitable endeavors.



SCHMIDT FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE TO QUALIFYING MPCC STUDENTS

RENEWABLE \$5,000 SCHOLARSHIPS ARE NOW AVAILABLE to qualified students studying business administration, leadership, entrepreneurship, marketing or graphic design through Mid-Plains Community College.

The funds were made possible by The Schmidt Foundation. Each of the five scholarships can be renewed for a second year for a total of \$10,000.

"We appreciate the Schmidt Foundation's commitment to MPCC students, Bob Schmidt's 'Forward Ever' outlook and his mission to improve the quality of life in our communities," said Jacob Rissler, director of Institutional Advancement for Mid-Plains. "It's a common thread shared with MPCC, whose mission is to transform lives through exceptional learning opportunities for individual student success. The dedication of Bob and his wife, Pat, to help others has continued to shine through their foundation. MPCC is honored and sincerely thanks the board of the Schmidt Foundation for their commitment to this scholarship program."

Preference for the scholarships will be given to students from these counties in the following order: Lincoln County, Keith County, Dawson County, counties surrounding Lincoln County and any student from Nebraska.



Make an impact today.
Leave a lasting legacy for tomorrow.

The funds provided by you today stay in our community and help to create a stronger tomorrow.

To discuss your impact, contact **Jacob Rissler**, Director of Institutional Advancement
308-535-3754 | risslerj@mpcc.edu | visit mpcc.edu/about/invest-in-mpcc.php

GROUND BREAKS ON NPCC HEALTH AND SCIENCE CENTER EXPANSION PROJECT



North Platte Community College broke ground on the expansion of its Health and Science Center May 25.

The event was attended by supporters, donors, local businessmen and women and dignitaries from around the state.

The Health and Science Center is located on NPCC's South Campus, 601 W. State Farm Rd. Built in 2012, it is home to the college's nursing, medical laboratory technician, emergency medical services, paramedic, dental assisting, math, biology, chemistry, physics and engineering programs.

As the demand for more nurses and health care professionals has increased throughout the college's 18-county service area and beyond, so has the need for more space to train those professionals.

By adding on to the Health and Science Center, more classrooms can be created for nursing courses. Additional lab space for nursing and emergency services and an office area for new faculty will also be constructed.

Conference rooms, a classroom with flexible table and chair arrangements, private workspaces for students and a virtual innovation lab will complement existing programming and enhance learning experiences.

The total cost of the expansion is estimated at \$4.8 million.

The North Platte Community College Foundation is continuing to fundraise for the project. Those interested in making a contribution can contact Jacob Rissler, the college's director of Institutional Advancement, at risslerj@mpcc.edu or (308) 535-3754.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER RIBBON CUTTING

**MCCOOK COMMUNITY COLLEGE
CUT THE RIBBON ON ITS NEWLY
RENOVATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT
CENTER APRIL 20, WRAPPING UP
NEARLY A YEAR'S WORTH OF WORK.**

The CDC meets a community need for childcare while also providing a place for MCC students pursuing certificates, diplomas and degrees in early childhood education to obtain real-world, hands-on experience working with youth.

The process of expanding and improving the 1980s era CDC began in May of 2021. The daycare was temporarily moved to MCC's Student Union during construction, so services could continue uninterrupted.

"The original CDC was put together over time by adding spaces here and there," said Mike Steele, vice president of administrative services. "The setup was disjointed and outdated. It was crowded and did not result in a functional teaching environment. The new area creates more space as well as state-of-the-art experiences for students

as they learn the ins and outs of early childhood education."

Most of the upgrades occurred inside the CDC, away from the public eye, where the original space was reduced to a shell. New walls were framed and drywalled, and new wiring was installed throughout.

The former, boxy layout was replaced with an open concept center surrounded by a main cooking area that doubles as a Family and Consumer Sciences classroom, two additional kitchen stations, one of which is set up per Americans with Disabilities Act regulations and rooms designed for specific age groups.

Infant, toddler and pre-K groups each have their own space with age-appropriate toys designed to encourage learning and imagination. A multipurpose room was created for naptime or playing indoors during inclement weather, and a new restroom offers a changing table, short toilets and other size-friendly accommodations designed with children in mind.



Large, energy-efficient windows let in natural light while the décor features geometric patterns – including some in the shape of trees in the main room, vibrant colors, racks full of books, reading nooks, art tables, puppet show booths, stages for performances and many other fun and engaging amenities.

Outside the building, the former playground was demolished. The concrete pad and climbing hill were covered with a fall-safe surface and areas for music, movement, sensory exploration and engagement with nature were installed.

"We are excited the college has made such a strong statement about the importance of Early Childhood Education by the investment they have made in this space," Tyler Esch, Family and Consumer Science instructor. "Children and college students now have a space that is a great place to be a kid and a great place to be with kids."



OGALLALA WOMAN EARNS DEGREE AFTER THREE DECADES AWAY FROM SCHOOL

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL.

That's according to Gigi Berol ('22), of Ogallala, who returned to college after almost 30 years. In May, she earned an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Business with an emphasis in nonprofit management from Mid-Plains Community College.

"The same timing isn't right for everybody," Berol said. "But, earning a degree at some point in your life is doable."

Berol started out as a traditional student. After graduating from Columbus High School in 1986, she enrolled at Central Community College – Columbus.

"I didn't really know what I wanted to do with my life," Berol said. "I took business classes thinking maybe I wanted to pursue something in business, but I also studied fashion and daycare."

She quit school after a year and a half to take a position nannying in California, but the job didn't pan out.

"I had the paperwork filled out then got scared and didn't go," Berol said of the California trip. "I also didn't finish my last semester at Central. My parents weren't very happy about that."

Berol went into the workforce instead. She had a friend in Columbus whose parents owned the North Shore Lodge at Lemoyne, and they offered Berol a job there in 1992.

"I was only planning on spending that summer at the lake, but then I met my husband," Berol said. "Here we are – still in Ogallala all these years later."

It wasn't until 2017 that she began thinking about going back to finish what she started.

"I was at a point where my career required a college degree," Gigi said. "It was always one of those things that had been left undone."

She took classes online and via distance learning through MPCC because of the flexibility aspect.

"Doing so allowed me to schedule school around my job," Gigi said. "I could study over my lunch hour or come into work early and finish assignments before the office opened."

She took a couple of classes each semester, during the winterim session and in the summer. Some of her instructors also made accommodations for independent study.

"I just kept chipping away, one step at a time," Gigi said.

Once she got into the groove of taking classes again, Gigi found the college experience to be much more enriching the second time around.

"I appreciated education more than when I was 18," Gigi said. "I felt more eager to learn and goal-oriented. I wanted to get better grades. I wanted that GPA to be good. The older you get, you realize that's a big deal."

Her efforts paid off – earning her a spot on the college's Dean's List and induction into the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.



Gigi's biggest sense of accomplishment, however, came May 13, the day she walked across the stage at commencement and accepted her long-awaited degree.

"It was incredible," Gigi said. "Not just because I wanted it, but because as a parent, I wanted to set an example for my children. I wanted to show them it's never too late. You're never too old to keep learning."

SCHAEFFER TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

“What I enjoy the most about being a nursing instructor is having the opportunity to share my passion for nursing with future nurses.”



Mid-Plains Community College nursing instructor Addie Schaeffer has been selected to receive the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development's Excellence in Teaching award for her outstanding commitment and contributions to higher education.

The NISOD Excellence Awards were established in 1991 to provide NISOD member colleges with an opportunity to recognize individuals doing extraordinary work on their campuses. Since then, more than 30,000 recipients have been honored with the award by their colleges.

"Addie has been a great addition to our nursing department, and we are so happy she is with us," said Dr. Jody Tomanek, vice president of academic affairs and NPCC. "She is very deserving of this recognition."

Schaeffer is originally from Alma. She has been working in the field of nursing since she was a junior in high school.

"I started as a nurse aide at the hospital in Alma, and I just fell in love with it," Schaeffer said. "I knew right away that I wanted to get my RN."

Schaeffer graduated from Alma High School in 2007 then obtained a bachelor's degree from Bryan College of Health Sciences in Lincoln in 2012.



Her first job out of college was working in the observation unit at Great Plains Health. She then moved to GPH's intensive care unit, where she remained for five years.

Four years of that time, Schaeffer also provided clinical instruction as an adjunct instructor for MPCC's nursing program. She became a full-time instructor in the summer of 2018.

"What I enjoy the most about being a nursing instructor is having the opportunity to share my passion for nursing with future nurses," said Schaeffer. "I love being in the clinical setting and challenging them to enhance their nursing skills and their critical thinking ability. I still work PRN at the hospital, and to me, the best reward is seeing my past students in their nursing uniforms and having them as co-workers. It makes me proud of the quality of nurses the program produces. I am very honored to accept this award and still in a little disbelief because I work with so many great instructors that are deserving of this award as well."

Schaeffer will be honored at a dinner and celebration during the NISOD International Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence May 28-31 in Austin, Texas.



CLASS NOTES

DONALD ERNEST JACKSON '67)

was the Founder and Owner of Rehabilitation Systems of Illinois (1976-1987), Chief Operating Officer of Easterseals, Inc. (1991-2012), President of Hastings College (2013-2017) and is now retired.

DAN E MORRELL '82) Worked for several contractors including Johnson Controls. Started his own business 22 years ago and has been very successful. He gives MPCC a lot of credit for getting his professional life started.

EUGENE "GENE" ESCH '89), currently employed as a Training Center Coordinator for American Honda Motor Company in Connecticut.

RUTH M. LONG '89) has been employed as a nurse since 1989. She is currently employed by the Santa Clara County Jail in California.

DIXIE L SMELTZER '02) is an LPN at Linden Court in North Platte, NE.

HEATHER ANNE (JONES) SALMON '03) is the Crest View Care Center Nursing Home Administrator in Chadron, NE.

JASON SCOTT BAKER '13) Served in the US Army for eleven years and earned a Bachelor's degree from UNK. He is currently working on a Master's degree in higher education student affairs at UNK.

KEVIN P. BURKHARDT '18) works for a Family Services agency and completed his Bachelor's degree in Child Protection and Juvenile Justice at Bellevue University.



**JORDYN MOON ('22)
& GRANT PAVELKA ('18),**
May 28, 2022, North Platte, NE



**ANTONIA VILLANI ('17)
& AUKAI KAAI ('16),**
August 6, 2022, Colorado

IN MEMORIAM

LOIS ROMERSHEUSER '61

Ohio Died 02/08/2022

LINDA EGGLESTON '71 & '73

Scottsdale, AZ Died 11/17/2021

JUSTIN HILL '78

Bismarck, ND Died 9/11/2021

THOMAS RICHARDS '91

McCook, NE Died 3/13/2022

NANCY CHADA '92

Rapid City, NE Died 2/18/2022

BETTY BROWN '94

North Platte, NE Died 1/29/2022

FRANK CARLAND '94

North Platte, NE Died 8/31/2021

ALICE MCFADDEN '94

Dunning, NE Died 5/18/2022

JERRY BUSH '95

Lincoln, NE Died 3/9/2022

KIMBERLY DERMER '95

North Platte, NE Died 3/13/2021

PAT KIRTS '97

Papillion, NE Died 2/5/2022

RICCO MALDONADO '97

North Platte, NE Died 2/10/2022

PATRICIA THOMPSON '99

North Platte, NE Died 6/26/2022

MYRTLE BABCOCK '02

North Platte, NE Died 1/11/2022

MARK FATTIG '05

South Dakota, Died 3/25/2022

KAYLA KEMP '05

Tryon, NE Died 11/18/2021

DELYNN CAIN '10

North Platte, NE Died 2/4/2022

SHARRON HEWGLEY '17

North Platte, NE Died 3/10/2022

TATUM GOODSELL '19

North Platte, NE Died 11/13/2021

IN MEMORIAM

REX CHARLES PRESSLER

REX CHARLES PRESSLER, 68, of Phoenix, passed away on June 3, 2022 at his home. Rex graduated from North Platte High School in 1972 and enrolled in Mid-Plains Junior College where he was on the basketball team before transferring to Wayne State College on a basketball scholarship. Rex graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from Wayne State College in 1976. After college, he started working in banking in Lincoln.

LARRY PAUL SMITH

LARRY PAUL SMITH, 85 of North Platte, passed away on June 15, 2022, in Denver, after a complicated illness. He was raised on a farm with hard-working ethics and attended Grand Island High School. After earning his Master's degree in physics at the University of Wyoming, he taught math and physics for 36 years at Mid-Plains Community College.

HAROLD E. BENNETT

HAROLD E. BENNETT, 89, of McCook, died July 25, 2022, at Hillcrest Nursing Home in McCook. Harold attended Nebraska State Teachers College at Kearney where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree. He later received his Master's degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in Education administration. He spent 46 years in education, 22 of those years in McCook. In 1996 he was elected to the Board of Governors of Mid-Plains Community College and served 2 four-year terms.

BIRTHS | ALUMNI (NOTED BY GRAD YEAR) & STAFF

Kayden to Brandon Tolle ('19) & Courtney
North Platte, 02/02/2022

**Gracie to Dylan Brown ('18)
& Pammela Derio ('22)**
North Platte, 03/17/2022

Charlie to Eric Schramm ('09) & Taylor
Mitchell, SD 03/25/2022

Creedyn to Mayah McConnell ('21) & Mason
McCook, 4/15/2022

**Madalynn to Kelsey Cahill ('14)
& Bobby Cahill ('16)**
North Platte, 04/21/2022

Bryson to Brookelynn Bokoskie ('18) & Lamar
North Platte, 04/26/2022

Peyton to Kelvin Robertson ('08) & Katy
Ogallala, 04/29/2022

Dallis to Abbigail McNew-Baker ('19)
North Platte, 04/29/2022



Delilah-Jo to Sabrina Baker ('11) & Christopher
Burwell, 05/02/2022

Waylon to Tyson Franzen ('06) & Aubrey
North Platte, 05/05/2022

Talon to Angela & Daniel Stinman
North Platte, 06/02/2022

Gunner to Jordan Christner ('19) & Nicole
Sutherland, 06/03/2022

Chance to Aaron Kotschwar ('18) & Riley
McCook, 06/05/2022

John Henry to John Schimek ('07) & Mandi
North Platte, 06/07/2022

Boon to Jimmy Falcon ('11) & Karsen
Maxwell, 06/08/2022

Emery to Nicole & Jon Olsen
McCook, 06/20/2022

Hattie to Matthew LaRue ('13) & Annah
North Platte, 06/27/2022



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