

FALL/WINTER 2007

FOCUS

NTID

National Technical Institute for the Deaf • Rochester Institute of Technology



RIT's New President

Imagine RIT

Innovation and Creativity Festival

Imagine RIT

Innovation and Creativity Festival

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May 3, 2008

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**“Imagine RIT as
the nation’s first
‘Innovation University’”**

–President Bill Destler

**This won’t be your ordinary festival!
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- * New ideas for products and services**
- * Faculty and student research**
- * Creative arts and crafts**
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- * Entrepreneurial business plans**
- * Interactive exhibits for all ages**
- ... And more.**

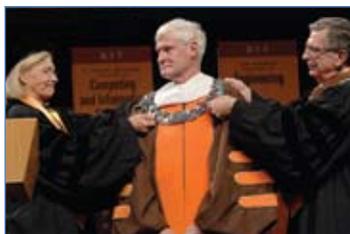
On May 3, 2008, RIT will host Imagine RIT, the university’s inaugural innovation and creativity festival showcasing exhibits and activities by RIT students, faculty and staff. More than 30,000 visitors from the Rochester community and beyond are expected to come to campus that day. Learn more at www.rit.edu/imagine.

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A SUE WEISLER

ABOUT THE COVER

Dr. William W. Destler, who became RIT's ninth president on July 1, 2007, was inaugurated November 9, 2007. The ceremony offered a look toward RIT's future while drawing on the traditions that have marked higher education ceremonies for centuries. Pictured here, Destler receives the presidential collar of authority from RIT Board of Trustees members Christine Whitman and Donald Boyce. Learn more about RIT's new president on P. 3 of this issue.

FEATURES

- 3** A Conversation with RIT President William W. Destler

- 6** Summer Camps Focus on Careers

- 8** Students Learn Life Skills

- 10** Entrepreneurs Blaze Their Own Trail

- 15** A Life of Commitment and Generosity

- 16** Preserving Deaf History

DEPARTMENTS

- 2** Alan's Update: Thinking Big

- 5** Alumni Profiles: In Our Nation's Service

- 12** Profiles in College:
 - May May "Summer" Pan
 - Vincent Rehkopf
 - Michael Walsh
 - Ebony Williams

- 14** Faculty/Staff Profiles:
 - Gerald Bateman
 - Luane Davis Haggerty

FOCUS

NTID

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MARK BENJAMIN

Thinking Big

My first meeting last summer with RIT's new president, William Destler, left me feeling solidly impressed with his background, knowledge and enthusiasm about RIT and NTID. Whether talking about high-power microwave sources (he's an international authority), discussing the benefits of electric scooters (he and his wife both own them) or sharing his knowledge of banjos (he has more than 120 of them), it's clear that he's a man of many interests.

He has some experience with deafness—a favorite cousin of his became deaf at age 30—and since arriving at RIT, he and his wife, Dr. Rebecca Johnson, have embraced American Sign Language. They took intensive summer classes that allowed Dr. Destler to sign a few words during his welcoming address in the fall. He aspires to deliver a few sentences in ASL by the time the class of 2008 graduates in May, and

his tutors have him well on his way toward that goal.

During a visit to NTID, Dr. Destler was wowed by our impressive classrooms, laboratories and performing arts area. He praised the dedication of our faculty, staff and students and told me that he looks forward to meeting our graduates during his multicity tour of alumni chapters around the country.

One of Dr. Destler's initiatives that has the whole campus buzzing is the Imagine RIT Innovation and Creativity Festival planned for May 3, 2008. This festival will showcase projects by students, faculty and staff and demonstrate how RIT successfully melds technology and the creative arts.

I personally am very excited about this venture. The festival will offer us a chance to feature some of the many creative projects that members of the NTID community are engaged in.

This is just one of the ideas that our new president brings to the table. I'm confident that Dr. Destler's innovative thinking about partnering with business and industry will help us move RIT and NTID to the next level.

As he says, "It's time to think big."

Alan

Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz



A. SUE WEISLER

Learning to Sign NTID faculty member Samuel Holcomb, left, tutors President Destler and his wife, Dr. Rebecca Johnson, in sign language.

A Conversation with RIT President William W. Destler

by Pamela L. Carmichael

On July 1, 2007, Dr. William W. Destler became the ninth president in RIT's 178-year history. He brings more than 30 years experience from the University of Maryland, where he most recently was senior vice president of academic affairs and provost.

FOCUS asked President Destler to share his vision for RIT and his views on NTID's role within the university.

FOCUS: *You have said that you want to begin a conversation about bringing RIT to the next level, and you have suggested that NTID is one of the unique features that will help move RIT to a position of even greater prominence in international higher education. What role do you see NTID playing?*

President Destler: NTID provides a kind of diversity not found at any other university in the world. The mainstreaming of deaf students here gives all of our students a chance to

work together and learn in a manner not available to them at other universities, and deaf students bring a unique experience and background that we all can learn and benefit from.

FOCUS: *Even before your official arrival on campus, you began a conversation with the community, asking us to "imagine RIT as the first innovation university." What is your definition of innovation, and why do you think it's important to RIT and our students?*

President Destler: I use the word innovation as an all-encompassing term that includes creative work in the arts, research, innovative ideas for new products and services and unique approaches to education, of which NTID is a perfect example.

Innovation is one of our country's last competitive advantages. Young Americans want to walk to the beat of their own drummer, and their desire to be different is an innate American

characteristic. Channeling that constructively will foster the United States' leadership in technical innovation and ideas for new products and services.

FOCUS: *You have set May 3, 2008, as the date for RIT's first "innovation festival." What's your vision for the festival?*

President Destler: I want to attract 30,000 people to this first annual festival and expose them to hundreds of examples of student, faculty and staff creativity and innovation. The Imagine RIT Innovation and Creativity Festival will showcase new ideas for products and services, creative arts and crafts, innovative educational approaches, unique productions in NTID's Panara Theatre, faculty and student research and new approaches to improving communication for deaf students. I want to begin to position RIT as a center of creativity and innovation, driven by a focus on business and technology as well as on design and the creative arts.

FOCUS: You also have talked about “Corporate R & D at RIT”—making RIT students, faculty, staff and facilities available to companies for research and development projects at low cost and without intellectual property ownership issues. How do you see deaf and hard-of-hearing students contributing to and benefiting from this initiative?

President Destler: This initiative will benefit everyone involved. Companies will have the opportunity to do new product research and development and at the same time identify potential future employees from among the students working on their projects. Students will have the opportunity to distinguish themselves with potential future employers and gain experience that will serve them well in their careers. In addition, new products and service innovations that benefit the deaf community can be a significant economic opportunity for American companies, and the extent to which we at RIT can work with companies to help develop these new products and services will be good for the companies, the students and the deaf community as a whole.

FOCUS: In your recent essay published in Rochester’s Democrat & Chronicle, you indicated that NTID is one of the factors that attracted you and your wife [Dr. Rebecca Johnson] to RIT. What about NTID attracted you?

President Destler: The idea of coming to RIT and having the opportunity to learn more about the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, be exposed to a new culture and learn sign language was very appealing.

My cousin Laura, who was born 10 days after me, became deaf in her early 30s, so I became acquainted with the challenges and opportunities that the deaf community faces before I arrived at RIT. I was inspired by the extraordinary efforts that members of the deaf community make to succeed in spite of the challenges they face.

FOCUS: You’ve said that you and your wife are committed to learning American Sign Language. What has your experience been so far?

President Destler: We made the commitment to learn ASL because it’s incumbent upon us to be able to effectively communicate with all RIT students, faculty and staff. I’m enjoying learning ASL, although my schedule doesn’t allow me as many opportunities to learn as I’d like. Nevertheless, I am progressing and think I will be modestly capable of communicating by the end of my first year here.



Dr. William Destler

FOCUS: Since arriving on campus, you have visited each of RIT’s colleges. What stands out in your mind from your visit to NTID?

President Destler: What’s obvious to me is the extraordinary commitment of the faculty and staff to the responsibility they have undertaken to educate deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. It’s noble work being done by noble people.

FOCUS: You have been seen having lunch with students in the Student Alumni Union. What have you learned during these informal chats?

President Destler: Everything you can imagine. I ask everyone what they like most and least about RIT, and the information I get is very useful as I look at where RIT needs to improve and where we’re doing well.

FOCUS: You have called RIT a “national treasure.” What makes it so?

President Destler: RIT is the right brain meeting the left brain in a collision of innovative energy. We have artists and designers on one hand, and technical people and engineers on the other, and NTID adding a unique diversity to the mix. We need to continue to value and encourage the intersection of those parts of our community and the wonderful things that result.

Biography

Prior to coming to RIT, Dr. William W. Destler spent more than 30 years at the University of Maryland, rising from the ranks of research associate and assistant professor of electrical engineering to senior vice president of academic affairs and provost. He also served as electrical engineering department chair, dean of the A. James Clark School of Engineering, interim vice president for university advancement, vice president for research and dean of the graduate school.

Dr. Destler is an international authority on high-power microwave sources and advanced accelerator concepts. He has consulted for government agencies and private firms, received more than \$40 million in grants and contracts, published more than 200 journal articles and book chapters and presented many papers.

Dr. Destler earned a bachelor’s degree from Stevens Institute of Technology and a Ph.D. from Cornell University. His wife, Rebecca L. Johnson, holds a Ph.D. in psychology. The couple has two sons.

In Our Nation's Service

by Susan L. Murad

RIT/NTID alumni and co-op students have a strong history of government service in a variety of positions throughout the country and around the world. They are serving our nation in local, regional, state and national agencies and organizations, taking pride in a job well done.

Defense Logistics Agency (Department of Defense) New Cumberland, Pa.

After earning his bachelor's degree in Information Technology at RIT, Justin Drawbaugh, SVP '98, '01, '03, sought full-time employment in



Justin Drawbaugh

the information technology field while working for the Postsecondary Education Network International (PEN-International) at NTID.

He was hired by the Defense Logistics Agency for its Corporate Intern Program, where he spent two years traveling and participating in assignments and formal training.

"This time has been very beneficial for my career advancement," he says. "The program has been a wonderful experience for me."

Drawbaugh's job is to assess how prepared American war fighters are to complete their mission, and it's a duty that he sees as integral to the success of those conducting the missions themselves.

"The challenging aspect of this job is providing the best logistical support possible," he explains. "America's war fighters put their lives on the line for us. It's our responsibility to make sure they can accomplish their mission, and then get them home safely to their loved ones."

NORAD USNORTHCOM NNC (Homeland Security)

Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado Springs, Colo.

"My family has a long military history," says Michael Dowds, SVP '85, '95, '98.



Michael Dowds

My father is an Army Lt. Colonel, his father was killed at the Battle of the Bulge in World War II and his stepfather was at the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Because I am deaf, government

service is the closest I can get to being in the military."

After graduating from RIT with associate and bachelor's degrees in Computer Science and Information Technology, Dowds worked for Hewlett Packard and Microsoft before beginning his work with the Air Force.

His official job title is 'computer assistant,' a military term for information technology positions.

Dowds credits his fraternity connections at RIT/NTID for helping to improve his leadership skills and his career success.

"Juggling RIT's fast academic pace, fraternity activities and social life taught me time management and the importance of taking care of your health," he says. "Perseverance is important as is an optimistic attitude toward life."

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

San Francisco Region



David Spaulding

Protecting the nation's financial institutions is the job of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. The agency is charged with insuring depositors and

investigating practices within banks.

As a financial institution specialist for the San Francisco Region, David

Spaulding, '04, '06, travels to banks throughout nine western states, including Hawaii, Guam and the Federated State of Micronesia.

"My responsibilities include assessing financial institutions for unsound practices and compliance with federal laws," he explains.

"I was fortunate to have faculty in the NTID Business Department and the RIT College of Business who influenced my work ethic," he says. "The depth of courses and excellent professors prepared me for this wonderful opportunity."

Novonics Corporation

(contractor to government agencies)
Orlando, Fla.

Lissandra Clark, SVP '97, '02, '05, worked for the federal government during her co-op assignment with the Training Systems Division of the



Lissandra Clark

Naval Air Warfare Center, and now works for Novonics Corporation, a contractor working with the Department of Defense, the Navy Human Performance Center, the National

Institute of Justice and other government agencies.

"I enjoy working on projects that are related to training for the government," says Clark, who lives and works in the Orlando, Fla., area. "It feels like I'm really helping our military."

Clark sees interactive online training and adaptation of gaming-style training videos for the military as a positive, and she is proud to be part of the field.

"Working with newer technologies can be challenging, but I've overcome the obstacles," she says. "You need to be confident and complete your projects in a timely fashion. It helped me to meet with NTID's Center on Employment to get a jumpstart on my career."



Exploring Automation EYF participants venture into the realm of automation by creating robots.

Taking the First Step Manning McCutchen, right, uses assistant Don Carter during the Steps to Success program.

Summer Camps Focus on Careers

by Kathy A. Johncox

Architect, scientist, teacher, engineer. What shall I be when I grow up?

The middle school and high school years are when young people begin to ask questions and make decisions that will affect their options for careers. Having the chance to sample different careers, learn what it takes to succeed in a specific occupation and discover if their interests and abilities will match their career choice can give students information that may be the key to future success.

Last summer, nearly 300 deaf and hard-of-hearing students in grades seven through 11 arrived at RIT from all over the United States and Canada to participate in three summer camps that provided them not only with career information, but also with a chance to experience life on campus and have fun with new friends.

Explore Your Future has been a powerful summer experience for thousands of high school students since 1985. TechGirlz and Steps to Success are more recent additions

created to encourage students to strive for greater academic success early in their school experience to prepare for college and the rewards it can bring.

All three programs have a strong—and popular—parent component.

“I can’t emphasize enough what support from parents means to the college preparatory process,” says Gerard Buckley, NTID assistant vice president for college advancement. “And each summer, parents tell us they enjoy connecting with other parents in similar circumstances, getting their questions answered and learning how they can support their students.”

“The short-term benefits of these summer experiences are that students enjoy learning, get a taste of college life and take part in academic, cultural and social events with deaf and hard-of-hearing peers,” says Mark Sommer, RIT/NTID director of pre-college outreach. “Long term, our aim is to help camp participants and their parents understand what kind of preparation it takes in middle school and high school to get into and succeed in college.”

Steps to Success— Taking the First Step

Steps to Success, a weekend mini-camp for African-American, Latino and

Native American (AALANA) seventh, eighth and ninth graders and their parents, gives students the chance to see themselves as college bound and learn what it takes to get ready.

“Research has shown that AALANA students are, more often than not, underrepresented at the college level,” says Dianne Brooks, NTID associate dean for outreach. “Steps to Success encourages young AALANA students to strive academically early in their school experience, so they are on the path to college acceptance and career success.”

Part of what makes the program unique is that while students are sampling careers, learning about college and enjoying team-building activities, parents attend two and a half days of activities during which they are empowered to take an active role in their students’ education by sharing experiences, information about resources and strategies for educational success as well as beginning to develop a network of parents who can support each other.

“The vast amount of information provided to both parents and students, life stories shared and the passion and encouragement shown was so inspiring,” says Maxine McCutchen, grandmother of eighth-grader, Manning McCutchen, from Stockbridge, Ga.



MARK BENJAMIN
RYAN YELONISIS



Science Comes Alive TechGirlz participant Velarie Stephens and assistant professor Todd Pagano team up to analyze DNA.

his new-found machining skills to work with student

“As parents, and grandparents, we often struggle with decisions and the ‘powers that be,’ trying to make sure our children are not short-changed and are given opportunities to have full, successful and productive lives. RIT staff and students certainly demonstrated that is possible with education playing a key role.”

“This experience was great because it has made me try even harder in school to achieve my future goals,” says Manning. “I like knowing that I have the same opportunities that anyone else has to go to college, and that I can choose any career I want.”

TechGirlz—Science Comes Alive

Recent statistics indicate that the United States is trailing other countries in producing experts in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Engaging students at younger ages in those fields is a goal of many high schools and colleges today.

“TechGirlz gives eighth graders the opportunity to spend a week exploring STEM programs at college,” says Sommer. “It’s our intent to build on the interest of middle school girls who already enjoy math and science and encourage them to see themselves in careers that require those skills.”

From building their own computer to take home, to a field trip to the Challenger Learning Center at Rochester’s Strasenburgh Planetarium, to an afternoon at an amusement park to study the physics of the roller

coaster, the girls enjoyed days and nights filled with science and fun.

“I think that the most useful part of TechGirlz is the exposure to college life and careers for deaf girls,” says Kim Stephens, mother of Velarie, an eighth grader from Yorba Linda, Calif. “College became more of a reality, and the most important thing is the age of the girls attending the program. By reaching and connecting with Velarie at 14 years old, she now has a better idea of what classes she wants and needs in high school.”

“What I liked best was analyzing a crime in the lab,” says Velarie. “I really enjoyed using the special DNA to figure out who committed the crime. I also learned that math is important and will help me with concepts in graphic design and will help me problem solve.”

Explore Your Future – What’s Out There For Me?

EYF is a career exploration program for college-bound students entering 11th and 12th grade. This year more than 250 students completed career interest evaluations and sampled various careers to determine which ones matched their interests and abilities. On the final day of camp, parents learned about financial aid and how best to help their students during the transition from high school to college.

All this, interspersed with a visit to an amusement park, dances, bowling and ice-skating, prompted Javier Tabares, a senior at the Florida School

for the Deaf and Blind, to say, “If I had to describe EYF in one word, I would say ‘exciting.’ I met a lot of people who talked to me about careers, and I learned a lot about what I might major in and the skills that I will need.”

His mother, Isabel De La Serna, agrees.

“It’s almost impossible to enumerate the countless benefits Javier took away from EYF,” she says. “The simple fact of meeting so many other deaf students, and the opportunity to see the possibilities available to him in the future were priceless byproducts of EYF. Most valuable to him, from my perspective, was the chance to see the possibilities and to realize that achieving them was very much dependent on his own determination and perseverance.”

Tabares’ experience is similar to that of so many other students who learn about themselves and find some direction here on the RIT campus.

“The saying ‘Knowledge is Power’ really applies to our summer outreach programs,” says Buckley. “Students of all ages and their parents leave armed with knowledge about career directions and what it takes to prepare for college and have a successful experience. That knowledge gives students the power to succeed in their personal and professional lives.”

Editor’s Note: For information about 2008 RIT/NTID camps and competitions for students with hearing loss, visit www.rit.edu/NTID/Outreach.

Students Learn Life Skills

by Ilene J. Avallone



involved in the total college community furthers student learning and personal development, contributes to overall satisfaction and enhances student success,” she says.

School spirit initiatives at RIT/NTID have soared to new heights over the past several years. Strong student leadership; construction of the CSD Student Development Center, a place where students, faculty and staff meet and mingle; and SpiRIT Fridays, when students, faculty and staff don the RIT colors of orange and brown to celebrate their community pride, continue to drive the momentum of school spirit and unity within the campus community.

Student life at RIT/NTID is shaped by several groups that expose students to a wide range of living, learning and interpersonal experiences, beginning in their freshman year.

First Year Experiences

During their first quarter on campus, all students take Freshman Seminar as part of NTID’s First Year Experiences program. The course is designed to develop and enhance their personal awareness, academic skills and campus community involvement as well as cultivate relationships with faculty, staff and peers.

“FYE works closely with NTID’s Student Life Team to provide an array of activities that complement the goals of the Freshman Seminar course as well as promote school and community spirit,” says FYE coordinator Linda Bryant.

This fall, students participated in skill-building workshops, learning how to set goals, manage money and build healthy relationships, as well as in activities to promote community spirit, including a community service project for the Rochester Open Door Mission.

NTID Student Congress

NTID Student Congress is a governance organization that provides students opportunities to develop leadership skills and promotes social, academic, athletic and cultural interaction.

NSC-directed clubs and organizations

PB Jammin’ for a Good Cause First-year students prepare 1,000 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the Rochester Open Door Mission, which serves people who are homeless.

College life is much more than lectures, labs, tests, books and studying. It’s also about meeting people with diverse backgrounds, experiencing new and exciting things, developing social and leadership skills and enhancing interests or finding new ones. Most of all, it’s about personal development.

“I can’t think of a time where I didn’t learn something new about myself from being actively involved,” says Christie Ong, a third-year Advertising and Public Relations major.

Because students spend the majority of their time outside the classroom, student life activities are an important part of fostering personal growth.

“We help deaf and hard-of-hearing students enhance their academic pursuits through a wide variety of student activities, co-curricular opportunities, leadership experiences, cultural events and entertainment,” says NTID Student Life Team Director Karey Pine. “Our mission is to create a campus environment that

complements classroom learning, creates social interaction to promote school spirit and connectivity with the university and fosters leadership skills necessary for success.”

Decades of research in higher education shows that students who actively participate in campus life benefit personally and socially as well as academically. They develop professional, leadership and life skills that impact their success after graduation.

“I learned so much while I was involved in student life—people skills, organizational skills, presentation skills, leadership skills, the list goes on,” says RIT/NTID alumnus Eyob Zerayesus. “These skills helped make the transition from college student to my role as an NTID admissions counselor easier and less stressful.”

Ellie Rosenfield, NTID associate dean for student and academic services, encourages students to become involved in life on campus and participate in the many co-curricular activities offered.

“We see over and over again that being



MARK BELMANN

Making Learning Fun NTID Student Congress leaders plan an exciting mix of activities to help students develop their social, personal and academic skills. Left to right, Nathan Blair, director of programming; Wyatt Hall, director of student affairs; David Spiecker, vice president; and Mia Sanchez, president.

related to hobbies, special interests, careers, Greek life, sports, affinity groups and religion are abundant, and deaf and hard-of-hearing students say they gain life skills by participating in them.

Says NTID Hispanic Deaf Club President Lisa Velez, “My involvement in student life helps me with my time management skills, keeps me motivated and teaches me how to work with diverse people.”

“My time management skills are indestructible,” adds Amy Lagleder, Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority president. “Every day I start fresh and plan ahead for the day and get things done. I’ve met many people through my involvement, and I’ve learned about myself in the process. Because of my experiences here, I have built up my determination and motivation for the future, so when I graduate, I can take on my goals with more confidence.”

NSC President Mia Sanchez and Vice President David Spiecker, together with other NSC members, plan exciting activities to keep students engaged outside of the classroom.

“We are doing a number of things—club activities and events, community service projects and NSC-sponsored events like World as One [a multicultural event of food and entertainment], a Halloween party, NTID Star Search [a talent show contest], Phatsgiving [a Thanksgiving feast] and RIT/Gallaudet Sports Weekend,” says Sanchez.

Adds Spiecker, “The goals of NSC this year are to promote growth inside the community where students are able to

find leadership opportunities as well as to promote a place where faculty and staff, and deaf and hearing students feel comfortable interacting.”

Ong says she joined a few clubs as a freshman and decided from that point forward to immerse herself in the RIT/NTID community. She was NSC’s Director of Communication last year, and serves as RIT Student Government’s Major Student Organization liaison this year. Ong also is involved in several trade organizations as well as in RIT’s Commission for Promoting Pluralism, where she sits on the programming development subcommittee.

“I’ve learned so much about the people who work hard here to make our community strong, and therefore, I feel inspired to be the best leader I can be for them,” says Ong.



MARK BELMANN

Applefest This annual fall event sponsored by the NTID Student Life Team both encourages the college community to delight in upstate New York’s delicious apples and creates an opportunity for faculty, staff and students to meet each other as the fall quarter begins.

Student Life Team

The SLT offers more than 60 programs during the academic year, including the annual Applefest, where students promote their clubs and organizations to the NTID community as everyone feasts on apple treats; the Ethnic Festival, a celebration of ethnic foods and cultures; Chocolate on Ice, an extravaganza featuring ice skating, games and all kinds of chocolate desserts; and programming for multicultural celebration weeks.

SLT professional and paraprofessional staff also work with community members to enhance academic performance for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. In the fall, they collaborated with NSC and FYE to present Let’s Ace It, a series of career exploration

workshops and evening study sessions.

“By fostering opportunities for improving academic success, we see students become more engaged and more confident learners,” says Pine.

NSC leaders concur, and this year sponsored the first Pulse Study Hour, during which faculty helped students study for their fall quarter final exams.

Fifth-year biotechnology major Michelle Koplitz says that being involved has enriched her experience here.

“I participated in NSC as the programming director last year; PEN-International’s Summer Leadership Institute program, where I traveled to East Sussex, England, and participated with other deaf students from around the world in promoting the development of our leadership and advocacy skills; and Global Reach Out, where I volunteered in Thailand during my spring break, conducting leadership workshops for young Thai deaf students. These activities have helped me realize that RIT is about more than academics. I’ve learned a lot about leadership, self-development, event planning, working with others and on-the-spot creative problem solving. All of these skills will directly carry over to any profession I go into.”

“Campus life at RIT/NTID is designed to provide students with an experience that is as intellectually enriching as it is fun and exciting,” says Rosenfield. “It’s an integral part of the college learning experience that prepares students for success here, at RIT/NTID, and after graduation.”

Student Clubs

- Alpha Sigma Theta
- Asian Deaf Club
- Caribbean Deaf Club
- Deaf International Student Association
- Delta Sigma Phi
- The Doves
- Ebony Club
- Hispanic Deaf Club
- The Masquers Drama Club
- NTID Computer Club
- NTID Student Assembly
- Sigma Sigma Sigma
- Spectrum Club
- Student Communication Center
- Student Interpreting Association
- The “View”
- WolK

Entrepreneurs Blaze Their Own Trail

by Susan L. Murad

**Moxie.
Chutzpah.
Determination.**

These are just a few of the qualities that many RIT/NTID alumni who have started their own businesses possess. What else do these entrepreneurial alumni have in common? A spirit of adventure, a willingness to take risks and most of all, a belief in themselves and their ability to succeed.



Jeff Nemconsky – Graphic Artist

When Jeff Nemconsky's, SVP '98, '02, boss retired, Nemconsky seized the opportunity to purchase Color Graphics in Newport News, Va., where he had been working as a senior graphic designer.

"Right now, we're working 50 to 65 hours per week to get things up to speed," he says. "We're really working hard to keep the former client base and build the business."

In addition to Color Graphics, which he and his wife, Heather, have been running for a year, Nemconsky is involved in real estate and business park ventures. His future plans involve opening an organic grocery store and possibly another graphic studio business.

"I really learned a lot at NTID," he says. "The courses I took in Digital Imaging and Publishing have helped a great deal with the business."

"Owning a business has been a big adjustment for my wife and me, but it has been getting better every day. The most important thing we've learned is to trust and have faith in each other."



Michelle Osterhout – Jewelry Designer

"I've had a lifelong fascination with unique jewelry," says Michelle (Johnston) Osterhout, SVP '87, '93. "It started when I was a child, making a necklace out of beads I found on the road and a garage sale necklace that I took apart and reassembled as a gift for my mother."

She now has a mixed media approach to creating jewelry, using photographs, oil color pencils, acrylic stencil creams, carving, woodburning and using different kinds of finishes. Then the completed "artwork" is pieced together with natural gemstones.

"If it weren't for my family and friends, I wouldn't have been able to do this," Osterhout says of her Michigan-based business, known as ~elle's expressions. "I'd like to find more time to be creative and expand."

"I see people's responses and feel I am on the right path," she says. "I learn a great deal when I get out there and meet and greet people. They all have something unique for me to learn from."



Jay Blumenfeld – Greeting Card Mogul

To promote his book of photography, Jay Blumenfeld, SVP '72, '74, created greeting cards using some of his book's images.

"The cards became so popular, that even though I didn't intend to do this kind of work, I continued in the card business and forgot about the book I wanted to have published," he says.

The result of this accidental career move is Smart Alex—a popular greeting card company that has been in business for 27 years.

"I fell in love with the greeting card industry," says the Chicago-based Blumenfeld. "Back in 1980, there were no fax machines, pagers, e-mail, relay services or videophones. It was very difficult for me to run a business being deaf in the hearing world, but I overcame all of the obstacles."

Blumenfeld describes his early years at RIT/NTID as an amazing time. "All my friends were go-getters, and we influenced each other to be the best. The teachers were incredible, and the education we received shaped our futures."



Carmel Flores – Photographer

A love of scrapbooking led Carmel Flores, '99, to rediscover her passion for photography and eventually make it her full-time career.

“I never thought that I’d be running my own photography studio,” says Flores, who lives and works in Indianapolis, Ind. “My goal was simply to capture the best images for my scrapbooks. It was when I started getting national recognition for my skills that I decided to give photography a try.”

Flores’ work includes portraits of individuals and families, weddings and other special occasions and general business photography. At first, she kept her job as a graphic designer with an advertising agency, but soon resigned to fully devote herself to her new business.

“My dream is not only to make my business successful, but also to capture the love that my customers have for their families and children,” says Flores. “I hope that one day I’ll be able to hire students from RIT/NTID to work with me as interns, learning the art of photography and how to operate a small business.”

Flores credits her experiences at RIT/NTID as a Computer Graphic Design major with her ability to manage deadlines and multiple projects, and with helping her gain confidence.

“RIT/NTID made me realize I can take my talents as far as I



Gary Meyer – Insurance Agency Owner

A co-op placement, which became a permanent position, led Gary Meyer, SVP '75, '78, '94, on the entrepreneurial path. Meyer is co-owner of DHH Insurance Agency in Rochester, N.Y.

“After my co-op and job at Allstate Insurance, I began to think about starting my own agency,” says Meyer. “It didn’t happen overnight; in fact, it was 13 years later, but it finally did happen.”

Expanding and hiring more deaf people are just two of Meyer’s goals for his company, which was established in 1999.

“I always wanted to have my own business, and with my prior experience in sales and insurance, I felt confident it could happen,” he explains.

“I also have another small business that focuses on Internet advertising.

“I was fortunate to have a friend who owned an agency and who guided me through and gave me good advice when I started my business. It’s really important to have someone like that. It’s an area where students can use our help.”

want to go,” she says. “Of course, starting a new business takes courage, and I’m still not sure how I got that much courage, but I went ahead and did it and am so glad I did!”



Michael Rizzolo



W. Scot Atkins

Michael Rizzolo and W. Scot Atkins – Getting to the HEART of the Matter

Two RIT/NTID alumni have developed an acronym to help those with an entrepreneurial spirit develop their dreams.

Michael Rizzolo, '78, '86, and W. Scot Atkins, SVP '83, '89, '92, respectively the owner and director of organizational development and human resources at Interpretex in Rochester, N.Y., recently presented a workshop on bringing that entrepreneurial nature to the workplace.

“You grow where you’re planted,” says Rizzolo, who graduated from the Interpreter Training Program at NTID in 1976 before pursuing degrees in Social Work and Human Services Administration in RIT’s Colleges of Liberal Arts and Business. “You create value by continuing to grow with the needs of the marketplace.”

Rizzolo founded Interpretex when he noticed a need for high-quality interpreters outside of the educational setting.

Atkins, who recently joined the company, credits his NTID theater, club activities and social networking experiences as being important to his career.

“I worked as a recruiter for NTID Admissions, then spent years at Sprint and Communication Service for the Deaf before setting up my own business as a human

resources consultant,” he says. “I did contract work for Michael and then came to work for Interpretex.”

As Rizzolo and Atkins explain it, adapting the actions that the acronym HEART stand for can help channel the entrepreneurial spirit and move it forward.

- H – Hypothesis or Idea** – Be creative and innovative.
- E – Examine Your Heart** – What motivates you? What are you passionate about?
- A – Action Plan** – Develop a road map to your success.
- R – Resources** – Not just money. Who is your support system? Getting out and networking is key.
- T – Take Charge** – Create magic every day!

“We are the sum of all the decisions we make,” says Rizzolo. “Therefore, make sure that you’re doing the kind of work that aligns with your values and makes you want to do your best every day.”

May May “Summer” Pan

by Susan L. Murad



A. SUE WESSLER

Some people’s names reflect their personality, and May May “Summer” Pan, who’s sunny disposition is as bright as a Southern California summer day, is one example.

Born in Los Angeles, Pan, who is Chinese, is the first in her family born in the United States.

The 23-year-old is majoring in Graphic Media Marketing and plans to earn a master’s degree in Packaging Science at RIT.

“One of my favorite classes is Graphic Media Work Flow,” she says. “It’s a challenge and mixes creativity with organization and the ability to manage many projects.”

Pan also has a passion for fashion, and she spent last summer as a co-op student at Bloomingdale’s in New York City, blending her graphic media marketing expertise with her fashion flair.

“I learned so much,” she says. “The people were very friendly. There are a few RIT graduates working there, and

they went out of their way to make me feel comfortable.”

When asked what was the best part of living and working in New York City, Pan says, “The shopping, naturally! I also loved going to Times Square and seeing the huge advertisements on enormous billboards. I especially enjoyed people-watching—everyone is so fashion conscious—you see so many styles and get lots of new ideas.”

Will she make a career in the fashion industry?

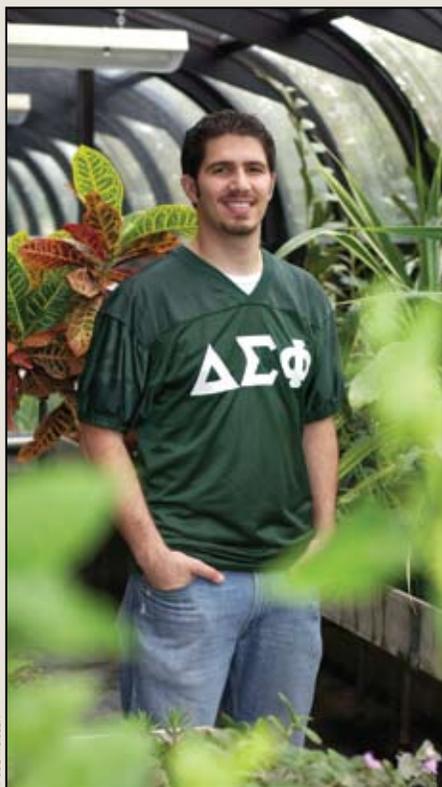
“I’m not sure—it’s very competitive,” says Pan. “But fashion will always be a part of my life.”

Pan’s original six-week co-op was extended to 10 weeks by Bloomingdale’s, and they recently offered her another 10-week co-op for next summer.

“They liked the work I did on photo retouching,” she says. “And I really loved working there. I had a great advantage—I always knew what was going to be on sale before everyone else! I like having the inside scoop!”

Vincent Rehkopf

by Kathy A. Johncox



A. SUE WESSLER

Vincent Rehkopf has been focused on success ever since his mother began telling him that going to college would get him a better job and a better life.

“When it was time for college, I picked RIT because I knew it would provide me every opportunity for success, with access services, educational support and experiences I can build on to be ready for the real world,” says Rehkopf, 21.

He recently changed his major from New Media Publishing to Environmental Sciences after talking with his parents and his academic advisor. Down the road, he sees himself involved in research or in teaching people how to improve the environment.

“I like change and variety,” says the third-year student from San Antonio, Texas. “So, I want a career that will give me a variety of things to do. I watched my dad move from job to job, and I realized that it was largely his college degree that helped him be able to move around to different successful things. I want that, too. Plus, my time spent in desktop publishing and computer courses definitely will support

my new major.”

Rehkopf plays intramural sports and works in food preparation at The Commons on campus. He is secretary of his fraternity, Delta Sigma Phi, and is proud of the way his fraternity brothers support education and each other as they navigate the ups and downs of college life. To relax, Rehkopf watches the Dallas Cowboys and San Antonio Spurs, and loves to travel.

He shares his goal of success with other students and has become an unofficial recruiter for RIT/NTID, counting at least seven students that are at RIT because he encouraged them to apply.

“Make success your goal,” he says. “Believe in yourself because it is your dream, and it can come true.”

Michael Walsh

by Kathy A. Johncox

Michael Walsh's team project for his Computer Integrated Machining Technology major is building a train engine. Walsh, 22, from Fenton, Mo., has enjoyed trains from the moment his father gave him a model train, and his passion for railroading continues in his personal and academic life at RIT.

Walsh enrolled at RIT/NTID as a telecommunications major, but found he was far more interested in CIMT.

"After I changed my major, I was much more interested in my classes," says the Garlinghouse Endowed Scholarship recipient, who has been on the Dean's List multiple times.

After completing his associate degree, he will transfer directly to RIT's College of Applied Science and Technology. He hopes to complete his bachelor's degree in Manufacturing Engineering Technology by 2010.

"I enjoy taking ideas and drawings and making them into blueprints and then

making the object—the whole product development process," says Walsh. "I am pretty good at figuring out how things work."

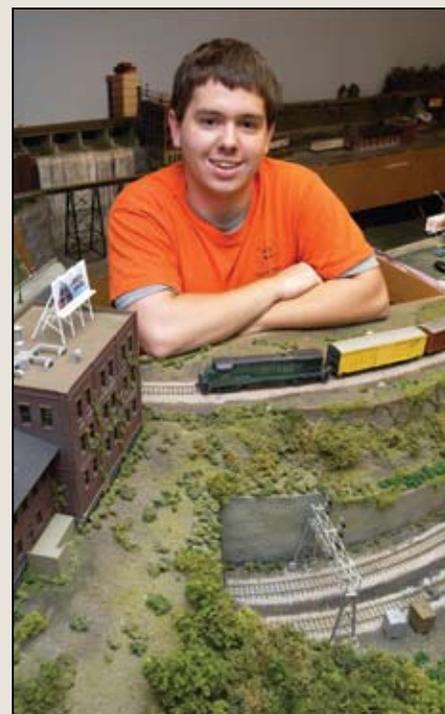
That skill definitely helped him during his recent co-op at Rock Island Arsenal in Rock Island, Ill., where he did machining for various projects.

"At the arsenal, I learned that there is not just one way to accomplish a task. I also learned what it is like to be in a real work environment—not at all like college."

Walsh works as a technician in the CIMT lab and is vice president of the RIT Model Railroad Club. He also volunteers at the Rochester Genesee Valley Railroad Museum in Rush, N.Y., repairing real vintage steam engines.

"RIT has given me a lot of things I never expected I would have," he says. "I have had strong mentors here, and met people with like interests. I even met my girlfriend here."

"The education I'm getting will help me live life to the fullest."



A. SUE WEISLER

Ebony Williams

by Ilene J. Avallone

When Ebony Williams was a young student, her mother told her, "If you fail once, it doesn't mean you're a failure. Try again."

These are words that Williams, 22, keeps in the back of her mind at all times.

She credits her parents and her sister, in particular, with her decision to attend college.

"My sister majored in literature and is very bright, and she has been my role model when it comes to working hard and doing your best," says Williams, who is eagerly anticipating the birth of her first nephew at the end of the year.

Williams says she chose RIT because of the great support services, the interaction she has with other deaf students and the ease of communication.

Williams enjoys the challenges she encounters as an Art & Computer Design major.

"My teachers can be critical of my work sometimes, but I realize that their critiques help me improve my graphics and make me a better designer."

In addition to her job as an assistant in

the Art & Computer Design lab, Williams also is a member of the NTID Drama Club. Drawing, painting, playing basketball, exercising and socializing with friends are her favorite pastimes.

And Williams is busy planning for her future.

"After I earn my AAS degree, I plan to pursue a bachelor's degree in New Media Design here at RIT," she says.

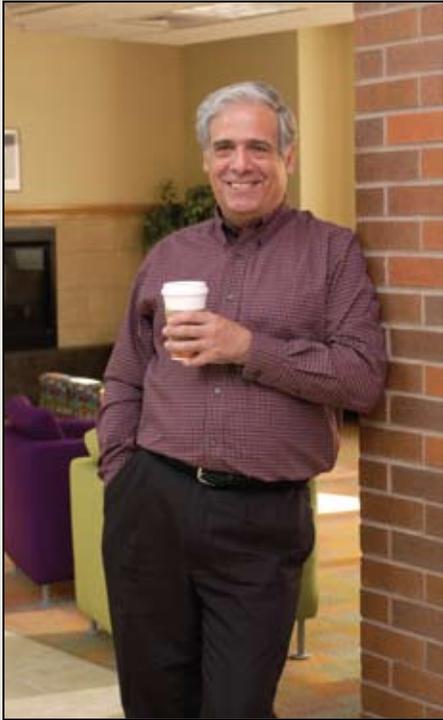
Another of her goals is to teach art to high school or college students, as she loves to interact with students and inspire them with new ideas and, perhaps, to pass along to them the advice her mother gave her that has served her well.



A. SUE WEISLER

Gerald Bateman

by Ilene J. Avallone



A. SUE WEISLER

“Growing up as the only deaf student in a public school had a big impact on my decision to teach,” says Dr. Gerald (Gerry) Bateman, director of the Master of Science program in Secondary Education of Students Who Are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. “I developed a ‘can do’ attitude that I wanted to impart to other students.”

Bateman came to NTID in 1985 and helped establish the MSSE program in 1995. Under his leadership, more than 150 students have graduated from the program and most now teach deaf and hard-of-hearing students across the United States.

Bateman’s goal is to introduce MSSE students to a wide variety of teaching and learning theories, educate them on how to transfer their content knowledge and help them find creative strategies for teaching and learning that will excite their future students.

He notes that teaching and learning is a collaborative venture and that he continues to learn from his students.

“Even after 34 years in the profession, I still continue to change and grow in how I teach,” he says.

The attributes of a good teacher, such as kindness, patience and good communication skills, are the same qualities that MSSE students use to describe Bateman, who last year received an Honorary Lifetime Membership Award from the Association of College Educators of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, recognizing his teaching and work in preparing teachers of students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

Bateman is passionate about his job, primarily because of the strong relationships he has with his students.

“I thoroughly enjoy working with our students and seeing their skills and passion for teaching develop,” he says. “I feel blessed that I get to know my students as individuals, and I value my relationships with them.”

Luane Davis Haggerty

by Susan L. Murad



A. SUE WEISLER

“Theater is not a major here, but it is of major importance,” says Luane Davis Haggerty, visiting part-time instructor and support faculty in the NTID Cultural and Creative Studies Department.

Anyone who has spent time with Davis Haggerty understands her enthusiasm and delight in the possibilities of igniting the creative spark in her students.

“Our students have a natural hunger to do theater, poetry and the like,” she says. “Once we engage them, great things occur.”

Davis Haggerty earned a BFA at Hunter College and an MA in Arts Administration at Goddard College. She completed her Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Through the Arts at Antioch University, and her dissertation has earned the Guskin Research Award and the Innovative Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Award. The script for her original play, *Windows of the Soul*, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

Davis Haggerty is co-founder of the Interborough Repertory Theater in New York City. She’s also the adviser for NTID’s Drama Club and is directing

A Raisin in the Sun and *The Vagina Monologues* in winter quarter.

Last year, Davis Haggerty brought a group of students to New York City to serve as extras on an episode of the television series *Law and Order*.

She recently applied for a Fulbright Scholarship to teach at the Iceland Academy of the Arts in Reykjavik, Iceland.

“There is always a way to make things happen,” she says. “If you stretch yourself to believe in the possibility of ‘yes’ – great things can and do happen.”

“At the intersection of all cultures is where theater resides,” she adds. “The humanities represent an ingrained human desire to bridge the experiences between all of us.”

Davis Haggerty is married to RIT/NTID Liberal Arts support faculty member Peter Haggerty.

“Peter is the best teacher I know—he’s what I aspire to be with my students,” says Davis Haggerty.

A Life of Commitment and Generosity

by Susan L. Murad

Joseph F. Dyer, long-time friend and supporter of RIT/NTID, died on June 5, 2007, at his home in Delray Beach, Fla. He was 93.

Dyer, who along with his late wife, Helen C. Dyer, established the Joseph and Helen Dyer Endowed Scholarship, the Joseph F. and Helen C. Dyer Arts Center and the Joseph F. and Helen C. Dyer Arts Center Endowment, is fondly remembered by many in the RIT/NTID community for his generosity, warmth and commitment to deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

“My first contact with Joe Dyer was in the early 1970s,” says Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, RIT vice president for NTID and CEO/dean of NTID. “Joe and Helen were at an event that my wife, Vicki, and I attended, and Joe and I became instant friends. We had a lot in common—he was a mechanical engineer, and I was an electrical engineer. We both went through school without the benefit of support services. From that time, we would see one another at various events and would always take time to sit together and exchange ideas.

“After I became vice president and CEO/dean of NTID, I met with Joe every time I was in Florida. We would talk about old times and the latest news. He was a very shrewd man—always wanted to know what was happening. He was so pleased to receive reports on how RIT/NTID was doing.”

Helen Dyer, who died in 2001, is remembered as a very dignified, warm, friendly and approachable person.

“She was an artist and very creative,” says Hurwitz.

In 1997, the Dyers established an endowed scholarship to assist deserving students at RIT/NTID with their educational expenses, and in 2000 they made a \$2.5 million commitment to the arts center. In total, the Dyers’ generosity to NTID is more than \$4.3 million.

“The Dyer Arts Center truly represents who Joe and Helen were,” says Hurwitz. “Joe’s right brain and penchant for technology combined with Helen’s left brain creativity. It’s a wonderful blending of innovation and art. In many ways, the center is the precursor to what



Joseph F. and Helen C. Dyer

President Destler has been talking about since his arrival in July—blending technology and the arts.”

It was extremely important to the Dyers that the arts center be well maintained and that the center always be part of the RIT/NTID landscape. To that end, they continued their generosity by establishing an endowment fund to ensure that there would always be a full-time curator bringing works by deaf and hard-of-hearing artists to the center from across the country and around the world.

“The last time I had the opportunity to be with Joe Dyer was in April 2007,” Hurwitz reflects. “He may have been 93, but his mind was razor sharp—our conversation went into such great detail and was such fun.

“Joe was an amazing adapter of technology—he enjoyed using his video phone and liked trying new technology. In our last conversation by video phone, I noticed he was beginning to feel tired, but he was still full of warmth and curiosity and had a thirst for details.”

Arthur Davis, attorney and friend of the Dyers, recalls how important the opening of the Dyer Arts Center was to them.

“When the Dyers decided to donate funds for the arts center, I was closely involved

in the process,” says Davis. “While it was indeed unfortunate that Mrs. Dyer passed away before the opening of the center, Mr. Dyer was nonetheless thrilled with what he saw. He felt that Mrs. Dyer would also have been so pleased. One of her paintings was on display—to Mr. Dyer’s great delight.”

Both Mr. and Mrs. Dyer were very much interested in bettering the condition of people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. They participated in many small and large efforts to this end, and maintained contact with many people throughout the country.

“Joe and Helen’s commitment to each other was amazing,” Davis recalls. “They were wonderfully nice people who thoroughly enjoyed each other. They had a very happy life.”

Joseph and Helen Dyer embodied all that RIT/NTID stands for—a blending of technology and the arts, a devotion and commitment to one another and to the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing students and the desire to leave behind a better world.

“Both Joe and Helen may be gone, but their legacy will live on at NTID through their endowed scholarship and of course, the arts center that will always bear their names,” says Hurwitz.

Preserving Deaf History

by Ilene J. Avallone



Talented Team Faculty and staff members instrumental in developing and launching a website about the WWII experiences of people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, and a website featuring deaf artists, are, standing left to right, Simon Ting, Cathy Clarke and Don Feigel; and seated left to right, Patti Durr and Joan Naturale.

RIT/NTID recently launched two websites to capture and preserve the history, experiences and contributions of deaf and hard-of-hearing people in two areas: World War II and the arts. The sites are enriching NTID Deaf Studies curriculum, contributing to the intellectual advancement of the Deaf Studies field and gaining recognition around the country, not only among the deaf community, but with historians and the general public.

Deaf People and World War II: www.rit.edu/deafww2

Moving testimonies of the heartache and suffering of deaf and hard-of-hearing Holocaust survivors, a streaming video clip of a deaf Japanese-American survivor of the Pearl Harbor bombing and a chilling photograph of young women and children boarding a train to a concentration camp are all part of this website, which casts a never-before-seen light on the experiences of deaf people during World War II.

“In developing a Deaf Studies course on WWII and the Holocaust, I realized how difficult it was to find and access historical materials,” says Patricia Durr, associate professor in NTID’s Department of Cultural and Creative Studies and the website’s content administrator.

Frustrated by the lack of available

materials, Durr spent nearly five years researching and collecting information.

With design, videotaping and editing assistance from Simon Ting, Cathy Clarke and Don Feigel of NTID’s Educational Design Resources Department, and with help securing copyright permission from RIT Librarian Joan Naturale, Durr launched the site, which covers three global spheres involved in the conflict—Asia, Europe and North America.

The site is designed for students, teachers, scholars, researchers and historians, and features articles, scripts, video clips, testimonies, artwork, books and links to related sites. Also included is an NTID award-winning documentary, *Exodus: A Deaf Jewish Family Escapes the Holocaust*, which follows a family’s flight from Nazi-occupied Austria to Ellis Island.

Durr made the site public, so others could have easy access and because many of the remaining deaf survivors and eyewitnesses of WWII have passed away or will pass on within the coming years.

Feedback has proven the value of the effort. Visitors to the website have come from 55 different countries, and it’s become an important resource for teaching a Holocaust Studies course at NTID.

“The site is an excellent tool for me to use to show my students the experiences of Jewish deaf people who survived the

horrors of genocide by the Nazi Regime,” says J. Matt Searls, instructor of the course. “It also provokes classroom discussion about the genocide still happening in the world today.”

“Clearly, there is great worth in amassing and disseminating these materials,” notes Durr. “Specifically, for deaf people whose stories have been overlooked, the sharing is priceless.”

Deaf Art/Deaf Artists: www.rit.edu/deafartists

Also developed at RIT/NTID is a website that showcases and promotes the works of deaf and hard-of-hearing artists in the United States.

The site is believed to be the largest that any college offers for deaf artists. It features art and biographical information of more than 60 professional deaf artists from around the world, streaming videos and articles related to deaf artists and deaf art. A resources section provides links related to deaf art and to individual artists’ websites. Also included is a group of RIT/NTID students whose self portraits with written or video descriptions are shown.

Development of the site was an expansion of the former International Archives of Deaf Artists website that was created in 1998 by NTID Arts & Imaging Studies instructors Paula Grcevic and Barbara Fox and RIT’s Wallace Memorial Library.

“The site was the perfect medium to showcase the art, but it was cumbersome to navigate,” says Durr. She was asked by Grcevic to streamline it, and then worked with Ting to make it more accessible.

“The site, which was two years in the making, is a great resource for any artist, researcher, scholar or professional in the field of Deaf Studies,” says Durr. “It’s become an important resource that my colleagues and I can use when teaching students in our Cultural and Creative Studies classes.”

Durr is seeking and collecting more materials for both of these websites. Deaf visitors can share their stories and experiences from WWII or their deaf art for possible inclusion on the website by e-mailing Durr at paddhd@rit.edu.

Save the Date!



June 26 - 28, 2008

Visit www.ntid.rit.edu/alumni for more information.



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ALLISON ANDERSON

Powerful Production NTID Performing Arts presented William Shakespeare's classic tale of power and tyranny, *Macbeth*, in NTID's Panara Theatre this fall. Directed by Bonnie Meath-Lang, the production featured deaf actors using sign language and hearing actors using spoken English. NTID Performing Arts is one of only a few groups worldwide that produce this form of theater.