

SPRING / SUMMER 2006

# FOCUS

NTID

National Technical Institute for the Deaf • Rochester Institute of Technology



**Congratulations  
to the Class of  
2006!**

# Elizabeth “Lizzie” Sorkin

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**This spring, Elizabeth “Lizzie” Sorkin**, a Film/Video and Animation major from Elk Grove, Calif., was elected RIT student government president for 2006-2007.

Sorkin’s achievement is historic because she is the first deaf student government president for a college where the majority of students are hearing.

“We don’t just talk about diversity on this campus, we live it every day in so many ways,” says the 24-year-old, who served as NTID Student Congress president for 2005-2006.

“Lizzie is an excellent communicator and a natural leader,” says Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, RIT vice president and NTID dean. “Through her hard work and dedication, she has earned the respect of students, faculty and staff alike.”

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### ABOUT THE COVER

Dana Reiter from Fremont, Ohio, who graduated in May with an associate degree in Applied Computer Technology, received an Outstanding Graduate Award and was selected as the commencement delegate for NTID. As a student, Reiter worked as a peer tutor, served as treasurer of the NTID Computer Club, and held leadership positions in Alpha Sigma Theta Sorority. She also was involved in community activities such as Habitat for Humanity and the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. Reiter plans to continue her education in the fall to pursue a bachelor's degree from RIT's College of Applied Arts and Sciences.

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# FOCUS

NTID

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## Saluting Our Students

Graduation caps and gowns have gone back in storage, cafeteria lines are short, and the parking lot has empty spaces. It must be summer at RIT/NTID!

It's always nice to catch our breath at this time of year and acknowledge the wonderful accomplishments of our students during the past academic year. This year, I am proud to note a number of firsts for our students.

Elizabeth "Lizzie" Sorkin became the first-ever deaf president of RIT Student Government during elections this spring. Lizzie is the first deaf student government president of a U.S. college comprising mostly hearing students. Lizzie already has great plans for promoting school spirit and bringing deaf and hearing students together for student government projects when classes resume in the fall.

Other newly elected student government officers are Sarah Gordon and Harold "Kamau" Buchanan, who will serve as president and vice president of the NTID Student Congress for 2006-2007.

The team of Justin Bak, Andrew Dickson, Steven Forney, Radames Marrero, Armin Mujkanovic, Samuel Sherman, and Kyle Trask became the first team of deaf individuals to compete in the international Tour de Sol electric bicycle competition held in May. The students worked with faculty advisor Scott Bellinger to build two alternative fuel vehicles, which won first and second place in the student division. They also won second and

third place overall in the competition, which has been held annually since 1988.

NTID's College Bowl team took first place in RIT's competition held this spring. College Bowl competitions pit teams against each other in a trivia contest. Team members Josh Allmann, Aaron Delbruegge, RJ Kidd, Lane Lucht, and Andy Naaktgeboren took second place in the National Association of the Deaf College Bowl held in California in July.

Finally, our annual Academic Awards Ceremony in May honored students for their achievements in their studies. Matthew Jenkins, Michelle Pandian, and Dana Reiter, who was selected as NTID's Commencement Delegate, all received Outstanding Graduate Awards.

Our Student Development Center is nearing completion and will be ready for its grand opening in the fall. Many of our student organizations will have offices in this exciting new facility.

Many more examples of our dynamic students and their interests and activities can be found in this issue of *FOCUS*. We also have features on outstanding graduates as well as faculty members.

Have a wonderful summer and we look forward to seeing everyone in the fall.

*Alan Himmwitz*



**In the Lab** Deaf Studies Laboratory (DSL) Director, RIT Assistant Professor Dr. Peter Hauser (standing, left) with DSL student research assistants (left to right) Corey Clark, Jason Listman, and Tiffany Panko.

# The Findings Are In: RIT Student Researchers are a Success

by Frank A. Kruppenbacher

Already a leader in undergraduate, graduate, and faculty research and scholarship, Rochester Institute of Technology is expanding research efforts toward even more meaningful teaching and learning. RIT is allocating more educational resources and providing more opportunities for all students, hearing, deaf or hard-of-hearing, to develop important career skills in research methods.

“We are doing research here at RIT/NTID, and we are turning some heads,” says NTID Laboratory Science Technology (LST) Assistant Professor

Todd Pagano, “This is impressive by anyone’s standards.”

Pagano is proudly referring to his former students, Jacquelyn Wilson and Ahmed Ibrahim, both of whom are deaf. Their *Analysis of an Active Component in the Essential Oil of Nutmeg—The Identification, Quantitation, and Biological Activity of Isoeugenol*, provided scientific insights into nutmeg as a deterrent against the Black Plague, one of the worst natural disasters in human history.

Wilson and Ibrahim’s findings were presented to fellow scholars at RIT’s

14<sup>th</sup> Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium in August 2005 and to colleagues at the American Chemical Society’s (ACS) annual convention in Atlanta, Ga., in March 2006.

“Through my research, I learned that ensuring accuracy is very important,” says Wilson, who, like Ibrahim, completed NTID’s LST program in 2005. Both currently are enrolled in RIT’s College of Science.

“One minor miscalculation can affect an experiment significantly,” adds Wilson. “The quality of my presentation at ACS impressed people there. That



**Jacquelyn Wilson**

experience taught me to be careful about citing and providing accurate information.”

Applying empirical research methods is often an expectation for graduate students completing their final capstone project toward earning a master’s degree at RIT.

Matthew Stefano and Joy Schultz, graduates of RIT’s Master of Science program in Secondary Education of Students Who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing (MSSE), both conducted graduate-level research for their capstone project.

“I wanted to see if Web-based multimedia technology assisted deaf learners,” says Stefano, now a teacher at Washington School for the Deaf, in Vancouver, Wash.

Stefano developed an instructional website about the water cycle for NTID students taking an environmental science course. The site included course content in four formats: movie, movie and sign, movie and questions, and movie and sign with questions.

After extensive testing of 38 students, Stefano discovered that signed movies with questions cognitively engaged students with the topic and improved their learning overall.

“My research was a large undertaking,” says Stefano. “I had wonderful guidance from Dr. Harry Lang, NTID research faculty. That work is now helping me as a teacher.”

For her capstone project, Schultz

worked with NTID students studying environmental science, with Lang as mentor and faculty advisor. She developed a course curriculum and related instructional materials with student-centered learning activities for in- and out-of-class activities.

“I studied the effectiveness of the curriculum I developed to see if it was successful in improving students’ awareness and attitude about the topics I taught,” says Schultz, founder of Sea Baby Sign, a Wilmington, N.C., company teaching families American Sign Language (ASL), based on the *Sign With Your Baby*™ program.

When she compared pre- and post-course surveys from her students, they indicated a significant improvement in both their knowledge about the environmental topics covered in the course and their appreciation for the environment in which they live.

“My experience taught me that the art of research provides a package of useful skills for my future work,” says Schultz. “Following a plan of action, using critical thinking, and citing and summarizing information are good basic research tools I now have available to use anytime.”

The Deaf Studies Laboratory (DSL), under the guidance of RIT faculty member Dr. Peter Hauser, who is deaf, provides students—including those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing—with an accessible, structured lab environment where they can develop independent

research skills. The lab also supports Hauser’s role as collaborating researcher at the Brain and Vision Laboratory at the University of Rochester, located near RIT.

“The experiential learning opportunities students receive from working in my lab put them in an excellent position to succeed beyond RIT,” says Hauser.

In fact, several of Hauser’s former psychology students are in graduate school, and three of his former DSL students are now enrolled in doctoral studies programs.

Avi Haimowitz, a second-year psychology major at RIT, who is deaf, is student manager of the DSL.

“My involvement in the lab is pushing me to become more responsible and to delegate tasks to other lab members,” says Haimowitz.

RIT student Jason Listman, who is deaf, works in the DSL.

“Right now I am assisting a graduate student by administering tests to subjects,” says Listman, a third-year psychology major. “I am also involved with developing an ASL vocabulary test. These experiences made me realize how critical work like this can be for careers in my field.”

“There is a lot of crossover between our activities in the DSL and what we are studying in the classroom,” says Haimowitz. “Dr. Hauser and I have started working on a study related to people who are deaf and the phonological similarity effect in ASL.”

The purpose of the study is to develop a better understanding of how deaf individuals process language visually.

Hauser says that student research at RIT is becoming more widespread because of the university’s focus on experiential learning opportunities and faculty scholarship.

“At RIT, we are excited to give students a better understanding of research methods and data analysis, and how to present their research findings,” Hauser adds. “The students who are involved in research are usually the same students who are really interested in learning, who desire to learn, and who enjoy learning.”

# Excellence Outside the Classroom

by Kathy A. Johncox

Some artists dream about having their work on billboards for thousands of people to see on their daily commute. Other people might fantasize about making a movie, or being a reporter for a metropolitan newspaper. But with outstanding energy and drive, plus the application of their academic knowledge, many deaf and hard-of-hearing students at RIT are proving that what Walt Disney said is true—“If you can dream it, you can do it.”

Many RIT/NTID students excel at applying the knowledge they gain in the classroom to real-world challenges. They bring an idea to the table, add the learning, inspiration and creativity that come from their college environment, and end up receiving exceptional honors. The students highlighted here have done just that.

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*“Any good idea with effort can lead to something big.”*

Alex Kern, Graphic Design student

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## National Magazine Publication

If you talk with John-Michael Stern about his journalistic success, he will mention Dr. Pat Scanlon and the Professional and Technical Communication (PTC) program at RIT. This fourth-year PTC student from Ashland, Ore., has two cooperative work experiences behind him, both at Pennsylvania newspapers. As an intern reporter, he covered many feature stories like the one about the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the banana split, an entertaining story that caused him to eat five banana splits in one day. He also covered about a dozen front page



**John-Michael Stern**

stories, one of which was the wrenching story of a domestic homicide.

“That one touched me,” says Stern. “It was hectic and nerve-wracking, and the reporting and writing of it was longer than a 12-hour day, but I wanted the experience. And from it,

I got a first-hand view of the fragility of life.”

In total, Stern has published more than 125 stories featured in a combination of daily newspapers and college publications and in two national magazines—*How* and *American Fitness*.

“I have to thank Dr. Scanlon for guiding me through the publication process,” says Stern. “He was teaching our class about writing for publication, and he inspired me to write and to write well. Much of my success has grown out of his mentorship.”

“John-Michael is a talented writer who is astonishingly energetic and inquisitive,” says Scanlon. “He just seemed to breeze confidently through the process of pitching, researching, and writing a magazine article.”

## Billboard for the Mall of America

Sometimes the creative process starts with a suggestion from a mentor—or a nudge from a mother. Alex Kern, a first-year RIT Graphic Design student from Minneapolis, was an art student in high school when his mother encouraged him to submit work for a



**A Big Win** Alex Kern’s winning billboard design for the Mall of America design competition appeared in two downtown locations in Minneapolis.

contest sponsored by the nationally renowned Mall of America. Art students were invited to design watches for a billboard as part of a major advertising campaign for the mall. Kern submitted his design of a malevolent-looking dragon that wraps itself around the watch band with its head falling on the face of the watch (see photo on page 5). And he won.

“My creativity has soared since I won the award last fall, right after I started here at RIT,” says Kern. “It really does something for your self-confidence when you win something big. Winning gave me a sense of courage and determination to achieve beyond what my professors expected. And being at RIT has given me a greater sense of freedom and personal responsibility.”

### High Falls Film Festival Award

Elizabeth “Lizzie” Sorkin says she grew up playing with a video camera. When she arrived at RIT from Elk Grove, Calif., she didn’t know what she was going to study at first, but then found her passion—film. Sorkin took a course from Nancy Ghertner, an independent filmmaker and adjunct faculty member in RIT’s School of Film and Animation (SOFA). She urged Sorkin to join the program, but Sorkin

didn’t feel she had potential. Ghertner convinced her otherwise, so she applied and was accepted.

Add some hard work, cut to the present and see Sorkin’s film festival awards won in collaboration with Patti Durr, professor in the department of Cultural and Creative Studies at NTID. The film *Don’t Mind?* was written by Durr and won the Short Films Audience Award at the 2005 Deaf Rochester Film Festival. It has since been screened at nine other festivals including the Toronto International Deaf Film and Arts Festival. Sorkin won with it again in the SOFA section of the High Falls Film Festival in 2006.

“Working with Patti has been a great experience,” says Sorkin. “Before, I would create films and leave them on the shelf. My work with Patti ignited in me a passion for working with deaf people in filmmaking. I am fortunate that I am somewhere where I get the opportunity to do that.”

“Lizzie is a compact fireball of energy and ideas,” says Durr. “All who come in contact with her are left with a sense of awe. Her leadership skills, time management, dedication, and insatiable curiosity are all impressive characteristics.”



**Stephanie Shubert**

### National Science Foundation Research Grant

Stephanie Shubert, a first-year student in RIT’s Imaging Science master’s degree program, submitted a proposal for the prestigious National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Award at the suggestion of professor and mentor, Dr. Maria Helguera, RIT’s Carlson Center for Imaging Science.

The Graduate Research Fellowship provides three years of support leading to a research-based master’s or doctoral degree and specifically seeks to assist students during their early years of graduate study.

Shubert’s research involves the high-frequency ultrasound characterization of skin, and she will continue her travels into the realm of medical imaging.

“I love learning how nature works and the amazing order, structure, or even chaos that mathematics and physics attempt to explain,” says Shubert. “Imaging science is the application of many fields of science into what I use everyday...using technology and eyes to see the world around us.”

In the college environment, with all the reading, papers, presentations, and exams, putting time and talent to things outside the classroom is the exception, not the rule. These four students apply their classroom knowledge to real-world challenges and reap benefits both personal and professional.



**A Winning Team** Lizzie Sorkin (left) and Patti Durr take a break from working on their next cinematic collaboration.



# Elena Iskandarova

by Frank A. Kruppenbacher

**W**hile attending schools in the Republic of Uzbekistan for students who are hard-of-hearing, Elena Iskandarova enjoyed different styles of dance, volleyball, and playing saxophone in the student orchestra.

When her mother won a lottery called “Diversity” in 2000, the top prize was a visa. The following year, Iskandarova emigrated from Uzbekistan to America with her family, all of whom are hard-of-hearing. They settled in New York City, and Iskandarova attended Lexington School for the Deaf.

“An internship as a medical records clerk in my senior year of high school led me to become interested in finance and accounting,” she says.

“RIT was my first choice for college, because it has good Business Studies programs, supportive services for students from NTID, and equal opportunities for deaf and hearing students alike.”

Iskandarova, who speaks, writes, and signs in Russian, counts English and

American Sign Language as her third and fourth languages. She is vigilant about mastering the communication skills she will need to be a success in the world of business.

“I work very hard on improving my English skills,” she says. “When I write essays, for example, I think carefully about vocabulary, choice of words, and grammar. It helps me to do my best in my business courses.”

Iskandarova’s extracurricular activities include participation in the Financial Management Association and the Next Generation of Accountants, two student groups in RIT’s College of Business as well as RIT/NTID’s English Issues Committee. On Thursday nights she enjoys watching cartoons at RIT’s Anime Club.

“I realize that expectations for students at RIT are higher than what we experienced in high school,” she says. “Deaf students in high school should do all they can to do well in English, math and science. Then they should plan to come to RIT/NTID because it has many good things waiting for them.”



# Matthew Jenkins

by Frank A. Kruppenbacher



**B**y studying organisms and analyzing their structures and functions down to a molecular level, students like Biotechnology major Matthew Jenkins find the seeds of success in a balanced approach to life.

“School is my first priority,” Jenkins says. “Through a balanced life, dreams and goals in college can be achieved. I am successful because I am comfortable where I am here at RIT, and I have some fun on the side, too.”

Fun for this Springfield, Mass., native is competitive swimming. He was a member of RIT’s men’s swimming and diving team, and he participated in two Deaflympics, one in Rome, Italy, in 2001, and one in Melbourne, Australia, in 2005. With strength in both butterfly and breaststroke, Jenkins has had numerous first- and second-place finishes in intermediate medley events toward team victories for RIT during his collegiate athletics career.

Equally aggressive with his academic studies, Jenkins graduated in May, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Biotechnology from RIT’s College of Science with high

honors—not surprising, since his name has appeared on the Dean’s List 10 times since 2002.

“The amazing services that RIT/NTID provided to me enabled me to take advantage of a diversity of experiences,” says Jenkins.

“I’ve thoroughly enjoyed my classes, co-ops, and working in the labs. I’m ready now to go to work in the biotechnology field, hopefully for the federal government, and start graduate school as well.”

# Aneesha Lane

by Kathy A. Johncox



**A**neesha Lane knows what she wants. The Art and Computer Design (ACD) major from East Orange, N.J., received her associate degree in May and wants to proceed with her bachelor's degree at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City and become a successful designer.

Lane, 22, came to RIT because she felt the mix of hearing and deaf students—and cultures—really matched who she is.

And she says it's been a great choice. From playing Juliet in the NTID Performing Arts production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, to her team winning fifth place in intramural basketball competitions, to being the dance captain of the Ebony Club, Lane is getting what she wants.

Of her choice of majors, she says, "Art challenges me and makes me think. Why did the artist draw that picture? Where did the idea come from? Why does that appeal to me?"

She likes the flexibility of the Art and Computer Design program and what she sees as its limitless possibilities.

"This is a great program for those interested in becoming successful," she says. "There are so many ways that RIT/NTID offers programs and support for everyone. Many of us have never had the kind of academic support we get here. Interpreting services are here if you need them, and there is help for preparing you to get your co-op."

Lane worked hard on her résumé and job search skills with staff members from the NTID Center on Employment.

"I had a great co-op last year at the *Indianapolis Star*," says Lane. "My job was designing classified advertisements and doing some page layout for *Indiana Magazine*. It felt so good to be there because it was about business. People were serious about their work, and I felt responsible just working with them. I wore business clothes, carried a briefcase, and felt just like part of the family."

Lane wants success. And with hard work and determination, she is on her way.

# Reyes Preciado

by Pamela L. Carmichael



**R**eyes Preciado of Santa Clara, Calif., is keeping his options open. After he completes his associate degree in Accounting Technology next year, he plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in RIT's College of Business, but he isn't sure yet what program he'll choose.

"I have time before I have to decide," explains Preciado. "That's one of the great things about RIT. I have the opportunity to get a wide variety of experiences."

The range of options available to him here isn't the only reason he chose RIT.

"I came here because I wanted to challenge myself with the superior education RIT offers," explains Preciado. "RIT also has excellent support services, and it's a mainstream environment, but there's a large population of deaf and hard-of-hearing students to socialize with."

The opportunity for independence in traveling across the country for college also was a factor in his decision.

"I wanted to see what it was like to be away from my family and live in another state," says Preciado.

He chose an associate degree program in accounting to begin his academic career because it fit well with his strong background in mathematics. It turned out to be an excellent choice—he's been on the Dean's List every quarter since starting the program, and his accounting skills are so strong, he was hired to tutor other accounting students.

What drives him to excel?

"I'm Mexican," he explains, "and I want to prove that Latinos can succeed no matter what."

When he's not tutoring or focusing on his own studies, Preciado likes to spend time with his friends going to restaurants, movies, and bowling.

His summer plans include enjoying time at home with his parents, getting his driver's license, and doing some leisurely reading of "something besides textbooks." But Preciado didn't want to make too many summer plans in advance. He does, after all, prefer to keep his options open.

# Daniel Pye

by Kathy A. Johncox

A master's degree in Business Management is Daniel Pye's goal—that and a good job after graduation. Amassing all that knowledge means this first-year Accounting Technology major is looking at graduating from RIT/NTID in 2011, and that's fine with him.

"This is a great place to learn what I need to know," he says. "And Business Management has potential for a good future. My mother is a business person, and watching her, I have an idea of what managing a business is like. I like the idea of being the boss."

Back home in Chicago, Pye, 19, the only deaf person in his family, has an older brother who goes to Howard University. Pye was mainstreamed at Whitney M. Young High School, and his mother encouraged both him and his brother to go on to college.

Coming from a big city, Pye likes the warmth of the faculty and students at RIT/NTID, the safety of the campus, and

the good learning environment. He has friends here already and can really focus on school.

"If you are motivated and enthusiastic and bring a good attitude, classes are easy," he says.

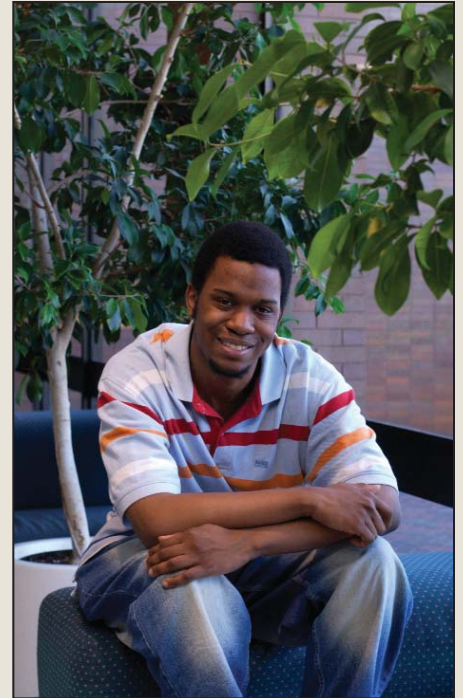
Outside of class, Pye is a member of Delta Sigma Phi fraternity and enjoys playing basketball, baseball, and soccer. For relaxation, he enjoys building model airplanes and has many in his room at home.

"I like the feel of the concentration that goes into constructing the models," he says. "It's a nice way to relax."

Pye believes the support system for deaf students here is second to none, as is the focus on career education. He particularly looks forward to planning his job strategy, and his idea of success is a job in the banking industry.

To help himself achieve that success, he has a simple rule.

"Don't care what other people think," he says. "Have faith in yourself."



# Carolyn Tully

by Ilene J. Avallone

"It was September 11, 2001, that made me re-evaluate my life and question what I was doing," explains Carolyn Tully, who quit her New York City sales job at L'Oreal and entered the Master of Science program in Secondary Education of Students Who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing (MSSE) at RIT/NTID.

"It was a turning point in my life. Working in New York City, viewing the thousands of names of missing persons posted inside Penn Station and meeting people who had lost loved ones made me realize 'Corporate America' wasn't important to me anymore; I needed to do something more meaningful with my life."

That realization brought Tully to RIT/NTID.

"I had taken two sign language classes as an undergraduate student and another continuing education course and loved them," says the Wantagh, Long Island, native.

Her aunt, who lived in Rochester at the time, suggested she look into the MSSE program at RIT/NTID. After researching

the program and speaking with Dr. Gerry Bateman, program chairperson, Tully was convinced this was her destined path. In 2004, she enrolled in the MSSE program, and has never looked back on her decision.

"What I like most about my experience here at RIT/NTID is the supportive faculty and advisors and helpful peers," she explains. "The encouragement and assistance these people have provided led me to persevere in the MSSE program, which gives me a dual certification: one as a social studies teacher for hearing students in grades 7-12, and the other as a K-12 teacher of students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing."

Carolyn, who graduated in May, is seeking a teaching job in the New York City area or on Long Island, where she plans on living to be close to her family.

As she thinks about her teaching career, Carolyn embraces Aristotle's philosophy, "The sign of a great teacher is that the accomplishments of her students exceed her own."





**All Smiles about the Future** Farhan Haque says that his 2+2 program helped him decide on computer networking as a career field.

## 2+2 Programs Equal Success

by Kathleen S. Smith

**W**hile continuing to offer two-year, career-focused associate degrees for students interested in immediate employment in high-demand technical fields, NTID is serving a growing number of students who want baccalaureate degrees by supplementing its traditional technical associate degrees with a variety of 2+2 transfer degree options for students.

These programs allow qualified students to begin their studies at the associate degree level at NTID, and then continue on for bachelor's degrees in some of RIT's most challenging programs.

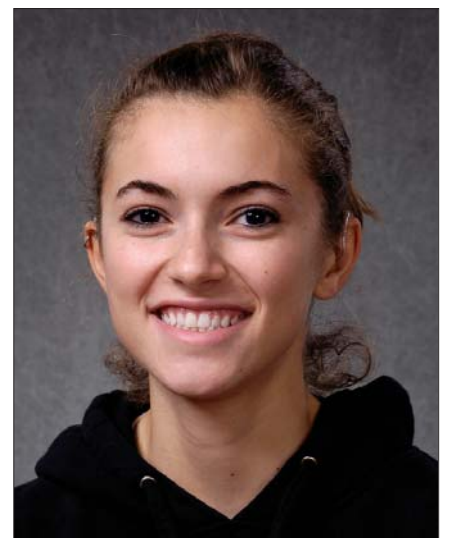
"Employers tell us that upward mobility is directly tied to having a bachelor's degree," says Dr. Vince

Daniele, chairperson of NTID's Science and Mathematics Department. "The 2+2 pathway definitely will make it easier for students."

Daniele is working with RIT's Center for Multidisciplinary Studies to build a transfer track for NTID's A.A.S. graduates in Laboratory Science Technology.

"The 2+2 option allows students to prepare for the bachelor's degree option with ample support from NTID, so they are ready for the rigors of the higher-level program when the time comes," says Dr. Christine Licata, associate vice president of Academic Affairs for NTID.

Amanda Massab, 21, of Brooklyn, N.Y., a junior Business Management student, says the 2+2 option allowed her to make a smooth transition into the College of Business.



**Thinking Ahead** Amanda Massab says the 2+2 option is preparing her well for the business world.

"I was definitely well prepared for the demands of a bachelor's degree program," she says, "because I already had had so many homework assignments, projects, quizzes, and reading...lots of reading."

The 2+2 transfer degree option typically offers course material at a faster pace than other NTID programs, but not as fast as at the bachelor's level. This middle-ground strategy is key to the success of each 2+2 program.

The 2+2 transfer associate degree option already is in place in the Business Studies Department and in the Information and Computing Studies Department. Applied Mechanical Technology will offer an associate transfer degree this fall.

"Each transfer degree is designed a little differently to reflect RIT's diverse academic portfolio," Licata says.

With 37 enrolled students, NTID's largest 2+2 program is Business Studies. Department Chairperson Mary Lou Basile says that the 2+2 option provides "the perfect opportunity for qualified students to be introduced to a four-year program" while getting support from NTID. Students get an Associate of Science transfer degree in Business through NTID before moving into the College of Business (COB), where they can pursue degrees in Accounting, Finance, International Business, Management, Management Information Systems, Marketing, or Graphic Media Marketing.

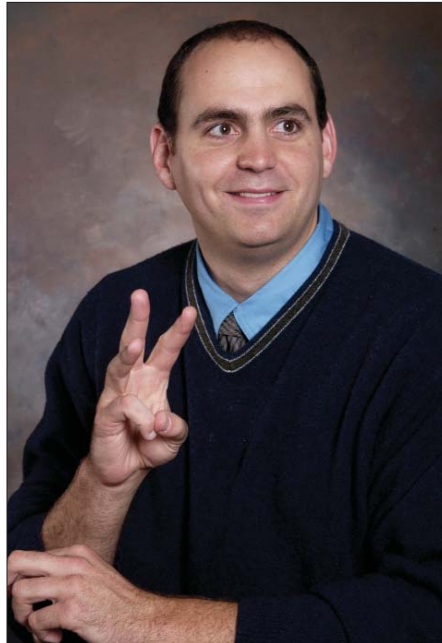
"NTID Business Studies and COB support faculty members all work together, which gives students a feeling of cohesiveness," says Basile. "They become familiar with their teachers as they move through the program and are comfortable going to them with questions or for help."

"One of the most positive aspects of this relationship, from the students' point of view, is the continuity that results from NTID and COB both being part of RIT," says Wayne Morse, interim dean of the College of Business.

The NTID Information and Computing Studies Department's 2+2 option began in fall 2003 with 11

students. This year, 17 are enrolled. Because of RIT's strong national reputation, Chairperson Elissa Olsen believes the numbers will continue to grow.

"RIT is one of the country's best universities for technology," Olsen says. "Our students know this, and they know that in order to find good jobs, they must be extremely well prepared."



**Passionate about Business** David Spaulding has gone from running a Florida flea market as a teenager to being NTID's first 2+2 graduate.

The Information Technology option requires students to complete an Associate of Science transfer degree in Applied Computer Technology (ACT). Students then transfer into RIT's Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences, to major either in Information Technology (IT) or Applied Networking and System Administration.

"This option is definitely working out for me," says third-year student Farhan Haque, 22, of New York City. "Most of the credits I got in ACT have transferred to my new major, Information Technology. Plus there are several things I learned in ACT that I doubt I would have learned in IT. I had so much experience in

things like networking that some of my IT courses were a breeze."

"This is a fabulous option for our students," Olsen says, noting that job opportunities are plentiful in areas like information systems and homeland security.

Similar jobs also will be viable options when NTID's 2+2 option in Applied Mechanical Technology begins in 2006. Department Chair Ronald Till says the program is specifically designed to transfer into RIT's bachelor's degree programs in Mechanical Engineering Technology and Manufacturing Engineering Technology, both of which often lead to jobs in engineering, manufacturing, or military defense.

"We have worked hard with the College of Applied Science and Technology (CAST) to maximize the number of credits that can be transferred," Till says. "This program will enhance opportunities to share resources and labs with our CAST counterparts."

According to Licata, approximately 80 percent of the credits taken in each of the new transfer associate degrees will be accepted directly into the corresponding baccalaureate program. This allows students to complete their studies in about four years, although some programs will be 2+3 rather than 2+2 due to cooperative work experience requirements that allow students to get experience in their chosen field before they graduate.

To recognize students' academic success, NTID offers \$2,500 scholarships for new students entering 2+2 programs. Upon transferring into their bachelor's degree program, students are eligible to continue receiving \$2,500 per year plus an additional \$1,000 per year.

NTID's first graduate of the 2+2 option is David Spaulding, 27, of San Jose, Calif. Spaulding, who received a bachelor's degree in Business Management in May, says, "The 2+2 option allowed me to learn the basics of my program and really helped me decide what to major in. Most students achieve one degree for four years of study; I like seeing two degrees hanging on my wall!"

# Pursuing Their Passions

by Kathleen S. Smith

Whether they're focusing on a unique interest they brought with them to campus or delving into a newly discovered activity, many students find that college is the perfect place to pursue their passions. The students featured here each have unique talents and interests—passions that express their individuality and bring great personal satisfaction.

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*“One person with passion is better than 40 people merely interested.”*

E. M. Forster

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## Gaining a Worldly Perspective

Spring break 2006 found third-year student Michelle Gerson in the Philippines, along with two other RIT/NTID students and one staff member, offering a leadership workshop to 75 deaf students at the College of St. Benilde (CSB).

Officials of the Postsecondary Education Network-International (PEN), a grant program based at RIT/NTID, invited the four to present the workshop for CSB, one of PEN's partner institutions.

The group talked to CSB students about preparing for the transition from college to work, described their own community service experience, and shared anecdotes about working in the real world.

Gerson, a Professional and Technical Communication major from New Jersey, who had never been out of the United States, says the experience was life changing.



**New Best Friends** Michelle Gerson embraces Filipino children, whom she describes as “beautiful...their big doe eyes, their wide-eyed looks of curiosity...it took every ounce of self control not to adopt all of them!”

“I never thought that I could have that kind of impact on someone from another country,” she says. “I felt I crossed cultural boundaries, literally and figuratively.”

Gerson was so energized by the experience that she even is considering international relations as a career field.

“I took great pride in representing NTID,” she says. “I hope I have the opportunity to go abroad and help the

international deaf community.”

Denise Kavin of PEN-International says the workshop at CSB was such a success that PEN is considering creating an on-the-road leadership training program to bring RIT/NTID students to different countries to conduct workshops on leadership and transition for their peers.

## Opening Doors and Windows Through Theater

Roughly a dozen RIT/NTID students and faculty members involved in an original NTID production, *Windows of the Soul*, traveled to New York last spring to perform at the New York City Deaf Theater Festival. The play, written and directed by Luane Davis Haggerty, faculty member in the NTID Department of Cultural and Creative Studies, depicts stories revolving around deaf characters and deaf culture.

Cast member Louis Labriola, a third-year Business major from Yonkers, called working on *Windows* “a great experience.”

Labriola, president of the NTID Drama Club, says, “Doing this show



**All the World's a Stage** NTID students celebrate their performance at the New York City Deaf Theater Festival.



**In the Swim of Things** Michelle Koplitz balances classes, a tutoring job, and, in this case, 7-year-old Ryan Wagner.

made me realize that it's not about the fame or fortune or money—there's very little of that to go around—but about preserving our language and the structure of deaf culture. After being in this show, I have decided I want to do as much as I can for the deaf theater community.”

Gabrielle Nocciolino, a first-year student in the American Sign Language–English Interpretation program, auditioned for *Windows* as a voice actor, but was re-cast as a woman who just had cochlear implant surgery and now was stuck between the hearing and deaf worlds.

“Bringing the show to New York City was an incredible experience,” she says. “The city has such an infectious energy, and I think we carried that right off the street and onto the stage. Sharing stories from deaf culture with people who are unfamiliar with it was a wonderful feeling.

“Before I joined the cast of *Windows*,” adds Nocciolino, “I was a typical freshman. I got up for class, did my homework, went out, and did it all over again the next day. This production gave me a good work ethic as well as a sense of belonging. It really defined a lot of my freshman year at RIT.”

### Teaching Kids to Love the Water

Michelle Koplitz, a third-year Biotechnology major from Eau Claire,

Wis., teaches swimming to children of RIT faculty and staff members each weekend through the university's Learn-to-Swim program.

“Michelle is an excellent teacher,” says Erin Snyder, coordinator of the swim program. “She literally is always smiling, and this often helps children who might be shy or hesitant to get in the water.”

Koplitz, who has held summer lifeguard jobs at camps and beaches in Minnesota and Wisconsin, also is a lifeguard at the RIT pool.

One of her biggest fans is Ryan Wagner, 7, who has taken lessons from her for three quarters.

“I used to be afraid of the water,” he says, “but now I really like swimming. It's a lot of fun with Michelle.”

“Michelle's personality is so warm that she immediately made Ryan feel at home, and he's come a long, long way under her guidance,” says Ryan's mom, Laura Wagner. “We hope to have her work with our other children, too.”

“I have the perfect job,” Koplitz says. “I love the kids, I love teaching, and I love the water.”

### Politics, Politics

Christopher Samp received a bachelor's degree in Public Policy in May and will continue at RIT for a master's degree in Science, Technology, and Public Policy. That gives the 23-year-old Michigan

native one more year to add to his lengthy and impressive political resume.

Samp is a Parliamentarian for the NTID Student Assembly, a student representative for the Institute Appeals Board, a resident assistant, an office assistant to PEN-International, an educator for the Women's Center, and a backstage crew member for the RIT/NTID Dance Company.

He has been NTID Student Congress president, a delegate to the National Association of the Deaf, a community student advocate for the NTID Student Life Team, and an RIT Student Government cabinet member.

Samp is passionate about politics and community work, both of which he believes can make a huge difference in people's lives.



**A Dream Come True** Chris Samp was all smiles after meeting former President Bill Clinton during Clinton's visit to RIT.

“I started doing community service work when I was 10 years old,” he says. “Being involved is one of the reasons why I went for Public Policy. I want to help make changes that will benefit society as a whole.”

Samp and his fellow students agree that a willingness to try new things often defines those who are successful at pursuing their passions.

*Editor's note: Chris Samp and Michelle Koplitz were chosen to represent NTID at PEN-International's inaugural Summer Leadership Institute in August in Sussex, England. They will be part of a group of 20 deaf and hard-of-hearing students from around the world who will spend one week learning about leadership, self-advocacy, empowerment, diversity, and communication.*

# Jim Fugate

by Ilene J. Avallone



**H**ow did a summer job at Camp David after high school lead Industrial & Science Technology Instructor Jim Fugate to RIT/NTID? According to Fugate, it was his interaction with two “fascinating” deaf co-workers that led to his wanting more exposure to the deaf community. They suggested he attend a college with deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and because Fugate, who is hard-of-hearing, was interested in architecture,

he enrolled at RIT/NTID.

“This made perfect sense to me,” he says. “I got the best of both worlds—majoring in the technical program I was interested in and being with the community I wanted to associate with.”

After receiving his degree in Architectural Technology in 1987, Fugate worked for a Rochester architecture firm for 11 years. He trained himself on computer-aided drafting (CAD) technology and grew into positions of increasing responsibility.

During his last few years with the company, he had the opportunity to design facilities at RIT/NTID.

His ongoing relationship with RIT/NTID didn't stop there. Fugate frequently presented at NTID's annual Summer Vestibule Program, a two-week orientation for students to sample the programs offered at RIT/NTID.

When the Computer-Aided Drafting Technology (CADT) program was added to

NTID's Industrial & Science Technologies Department in 2000, Fugate was asked to teach in the new department.

“Coming from the corporate world to the academic environment has been challenging, but so rewarding,” says Fugate. “Before, I worked independently and with other professionals. My goal was to design a building to the right specifications. Now my goal is to work collaboratively with the students to motivate them and to prepare them for the workplace of the future, which is constantly changing.”

Fugate continued his education once he joined RIT/NTID, earning his master's degree from RIT in Information Technology.

Outside of the classroom Fugate enjoys spending time with his wife and with the “joy of his life,” his 3-year-old son. Fugate also enjoys playing piano, reading, gardening and attending church.

“If I can connect with my students and help facilitate their preparation for a successful career, then my own career change will have been worth the effort,” says Fugate.

# Paula Grcevic

by Ilene J. Avallone



**T**he Eisenhart Award for Outstanding Teaching has never been bestowed upon an NTID faculty member more than once—until now.

Paula Grcevic, associate professor of Arts and Imaging Studies, is the first teacher in NTID's history to earn this award of distinction twice. She won it the first time

in 1992, and recently was selected for the 2006 award.

“Receiving the award a second time motivates me to search for new ways to improve myself as an educator and professor,” she acknowledges.

Grcevic, who obtained both BFA and MFA degrees from Pratt Institute, started her career at RIT/NTID in 1979, after working several years as a fabric designer in Manhattan. Her passion for teaching is evident in the creative ways she finds to motivate her students.

“I provide unusual class activities as a catalyst to inspire my students' thinking,” she says.

It is not uncommon for Grcevic to bring in scented objects and blindfold her students, so they can smell the essence and express, in drawing, their experience or memory related to that scent.

“Students grow from these artistic experiences,” says Grcevic. “The process

moves them beyond the barriers of their environment.”

Outside the classroom, Grcevic has many demands on her time that she willingly accepts and enjoys. She is curator for the 2006 *Mythology Images* art exhibition at NTID's Dyer Arts Center. Traveling across the country to find emerging deaf artists, Grcevic diligently has been working with them to prepare their artwork for the fall exhibition. She is co-founder of and a consultant on the Deaf Artists website that showcases artwork of deaf and hard-of-hearing artists from around the world. And Grcevic is actively involved in the Deaf Rochester Film Festival as artistic design director and co-director for the event.

In her spare time, she enjoys hiking, toy collecting, bicycling, and traveling.

She is both excited and energized by her students and is amazed by the artistic potential she sees every year. Grcevic says her teaching style is modeled after the Chinese proverb, “It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.”



# Jelica Bruer Nuccio

by Frank A. Kruppenbacher

Last February, while addressing the RIT/NTID community, Jelica Bruer Nuccio, NTID's Distinguished Alumna for 2005, was confidently reflective.

"All of us have high hopes," the 1988 College of Science graduate in Biology said. "It's good to have hope. It's very important to understand and pay attention to your needs also."

Bruer Nuccio explained that her vision loss was first discovered at NTID, and that she went through a lot of grief because she didn't tell any one about it at first.

"Open communication is the key," she said. "My true friends—especially my husband, Vincent—stayed with me, and I discovered that Deaf-Blind has an identity."

Today, as executive director of the Deaf-Blind Service Center in Seattle, Wash., Bruer Nuccio, who has Usher's Syndrome, leads an organization assisting Deaf-Blind people to reach and maintain their highest possible quality of life and degree of personal autonomy.

In 1996 Bruer Nuccio earned her master's degree in Public Health in Behavioral Sciences and Health Education from Emory University. That same year, she received NTID's Edmund Lyon Memorial Lectureship Award as outstanding female professional in the field of science.

She has worked as a research specialist and certified cytogenetic technician at Emory, as program coordinator for pediatricians at the Child Health Institute at the University of Washington in Seattle, and as an employment placement specialist for both the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Helen Keller National Center.

From 2000 to 2004 Bruer Nuccio served on NTID's National Advisory Group. She is past president of the Georgia Association of Deaf-Blind and the Washington State Deaf-Blind Citizens organization, and past board member of the American Association of the Deaf-Blind. She received the Outstanding Deaf-Blind Citizen Award of Leadership



from the Helen Keller National Center, Southeast Region.

"NTID provided me with exceptional role models," said Bruer Nuccio. "We must support it, so that it can provide great role models to future generations of deaf, hard-of-hearing, and Deaf-Blind students as well."

# Paul Casanova

by Frank A. Kruppenbacher

Lending a hand, hip, knee, shoulder, elbow, or even a foot is all in a day's work for RIT alumnus Paul Casanova.

As Project Engineer for Wright Medical Technology (WMT), near Memphis, Tenn., Casanova and his colleagues manufacture joint and extremity implants.

"We produce standard and customized devices that are implanted into people," says Casanova. "Thousands of patients, some as young as 4 years old, rely on our implants to improve their lives."

His keen intellect for things mechanical started early and grew rapidly. At age 9 Casanova took apart an old lawn mower to understand how it worked. A top math and science student at Clarke School in Northampton, Mass., Casanova skipped the ninth grade to start high school in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Cathedral High School in Springfield. He entered NTID's Industrial Drafting (now Computer Aided Drafting Technology) program, graduated in 1988, and earned a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering Technology from RIT in 1991.

Casanova joined Pratt & Whitney Aircraft in Columbus, Ga., as a tool designer and was promoted to a methods engineer in 1996.

"Aerospace industries were going through erratic ups and downs during that time," Casanova recalls. "Medical manufacturing companies provided stability and growth. I joined WMT as a manufacturing engineer in 1998."

Promoted to project engineer in 2005, Casanova creates new machining and programming concepts.

"Paul is an excellent programmer," says David Barnett, senior director of operations engineering. "When we have a major project with a short timeline, we give it to Paul. He is bright and always positive. He doesn't let anything affect his capabilities and initiative. He is a true asset to WMT."

Casanova's colleague, Jeff Turner, agrees with Barnett.

"He is an ace with CAD/CAM systems," says Turner. "One weekend, Paul worked to iron out problems with an R&D engineer's



instrument prototype. Paul's mechanical engineering background, modification tests and trials led to success. Paul is a special person—very knowledgeable and a good friend."

Married to 1988 NTID Business alumna Belinda McWhorter, the Casanovas are parents to twins, Burton and Rosalyn, 7.

**William Randolph Hearst Foundation Helps RIT/NTID “Show Them the Money”**

Scholarships often are key in determining whether or not a student can start or continue in college. Academic quality, family support, and proximity to home all enter into a college choice, but for many students, colleges need to “show them the money.”

RIT/NTID students are fortunate because, since 1995, the William Randolph Hearst Foundation has been a generous contributor to the William Randolph Hearst Endowed Scholarship for Financially Disadvantaged Students. In particular, the Hearst Endowed Scholarship Fund has had a significant impact on RIT/NTID students from minority groups where family household income has continued to be less than the national average.

To date, more than 40 RIT/NTID students have benefited from 102 scholarship awards made possible by earnings from the fund. Thanks to the Hearst Endowed Scholarship Fund, students from all over the nation are coming to RIT/NTID and majoring in Art and Computer Design, Digital Imaging and Publishing Technology, Applied Computer Technology, Hospitality and Service Management, Biology, Business Technology and the list goes on. RIT/NTID and the Hearst Foundation share a goal to continue to increase scholarship support for financially disadvantaged students, so they can find jobs in technical and professional fields and become active and contributing members of their communities.

Students, their parents and their future employers will benefit from the Hearst Foundation’s commitment to help NTID “show them the money”—allowing students to follow a path to education and a rewarding career.



Monica Saldana displays her Certificate of Completion for DIIT’s PowerPoint workshop.

**Skill Building and Career Development Workshops for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Adults in the Greater Los Angeles Area**

In March, a team of faculty and staff from RIT/NTID, in collaboration with the Max Factor Family Foundation, visited the Greater Los Angeles area to present workshops for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, with a special emphasis on the Latino population. One group of workshops, Deaf Initiative in Information Technology (DIIT), was designed to strengthen and upgrade deaf and hard-of-hearing adults’ skills in information technology.

DIIT workshops offered week-long training in subjects like Java Script, Macromedia Director, Visual Basic, website development, PC hardware and other technology-oriented topics related to the workplace.

The other series of career-building workshops focused on training both employers and education professionals to prepare deaf and hard-of-hearing people for successful careers in the workplace. Working Together: Deaf and Hearing People, was presented by members of the NTID Center on Employment and focused on training employers to successfully work with deaf and hard-of-hearing employees and showing them how easy it is to hire deaf and hard-of-hearing workers.

The Max Factor Family Foundation is an enthusiastic collaborator and has committed its strong presence and considerable influence in the Greater Los Angeles community to the improvement of the career education of deaf and hard-of-hearing people in Southern California. The foundation graciously provided funding and helped RIT/NTID make a connection with the Latino and deaf and hard-of-hearing communities through the PUENTE Learning Center and the Greater Los Angeles Agency for the Deaf, Inc. (GLAD). Jennifer Olson, director of Human Services at GLAD and a member of the NTID National Advisory Group (NAG), effectively promoted the workshops areawide. Jon Levy also a member of NAG and principal of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Program at University High School in Irvine, Calif., provided a computer laboratory at his school free of charge for the workshops.

As a result of this collaboration, 154 people benefited from seven different workshops. One workshop participant said, “I can take a regular computer class for a longer period of time, but would still be unable to grasp the concepts. This workshop was far more effective.”

If you would like to help facilitate one of these workshops in your community, please contact the NTID Center on Employment at 585-475-6219 (voice/TTY) or at ntidcoe@rit.edu.



Photos courtesy of Memorial Hall Museum, Deerfield, Mass.

**A Special Exhibit** This spring, the NTID Dyer Arts Center hosted a traveling exhibition entitled *The Allen Sisters: Pictorial Photographers 1885-1920*. The show highlighted 50 platinum prints by sisters Frances and Mary Allen, from Deerfield, Mass., born in 1854 and 1858 respectively. The sisters were teachers until progressive hearing loss left them both deaf and unable to continue their chosen vocation. They then chose to work as photographers and, influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement in the 19th century, created romanticized versions of the past as well as majestic landscapes. The Allen sisters' work was popular with book and magazine publishers of the day, and of one exhibition in 1901, a reviewer said "The Misses Allen use their camera in the same spirit with which a painter uses a brush."



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**The RIT/NTID Dance Company**, a unique ensemble made up of deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing dancers directed by Thomas Warfield, created the perfect picture of imagination in *Pinocchio*, the original 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian story about a puppet who follows his dream to become a real boy. The dance production had the look and feel of a fantasy-filled storybook, and the talented dancers expressed Pinocchio's journey through ballet, modern dance, jazz, tap dancing, and hip-hop on a stage decorated with vibrant colors. Pinocchio's story, which included Geppetto's workshop, dancing puppets, and the tail of a whale, entertained young and old alike.