

SPRING / SUMMER 2009

# FOCUS

NTID

National Technical Institute for the Deaf • Rochester Institute of Technology



**Record Enrollment**



# IMAGINE RIT

INNOVATION + CREATIVITY FESTIVAL



**Imagine That!** More than 25,000 people enjoyed hundreds of interactive exhibits featuring cutting-edge technology and world-class artistry during the second-annual Imagine RIT festival May 2. Nearly 2,000 faculty, staff and student exhibitors proudly displayed examples of green technology, new ideas for products and services, creative arts and crafts and groundbreaking research. Learn more about the festival at [www.rit.edu/Imagine](http://www.rit.edu/Imagine). What will Imagine RIT think of next? Plan to attend next year's festival May 1, 2010, and find out!

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### ABOUT THE COVER

A record number of students enrolled at RIT/NTID this year, including students from every state as well as Washington D.C., the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and other countries. Pictured here are students from all 50 states and Washington, D.C., holding flags of their home states. NTID President T. Alan Hurwitz (left) and RIT President Bill Destler hold the RIT flag.

RIT/NTID 2009 *FOCUS* magazines are printed on a paper that has 10-percent postconsumer recycled fiber, which results in a total environmental savings of 10.02 trees; 28.96 pounds waterborne waste; 4,260 gallons wastewater flow; 472 pounds solid waste; 928 pounds net greenhouse gases and 7,103,110 BTUs.



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# FOCUS

NTID

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*RIT will admit and hire men and women; veterans; persons with disabilities; and individuals of any race, creed, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, age or marital status, in compliance with all appropriate legislation.*

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MARK BENJAMIN

## A Banner Year

This year we welcomed a record number of students—1,450—to RIT/NTID. It was our largest group of students ever, even larger than 1984, when children affected by the 1960s rubella epidemic came of age for college. In the past two years, we have increased our total enrollment by 15 percent. While we don't know if this upward admissions trend will continue, it certainly is a wonderful time to be a student, to be a teacher and to be a staff member at RIT/NTID.

How did we manage this feat? We remained true to our original mission of welcoming students interested in career education offered in a unique and inclusive setting. We haven't lowered our standards...in fact, admission to some of our programs is tougher than ever. We will continue to work to stay ahead of both job and program trends; in this effort we will be aided by a new, major planning effort, Strategic Vision 2020. This spring we began meetings with faculty, staff and students to discuss where the college should go in the next decade. I will keep you apprised of their ideas and suggestions as the planning group reports over the coming months.

In January, I got a unique look at student life when I spent two nights and three days living on campus during a Student Government-sponsored Dorm Challenge. I was one of 20 RIT administrators who volunteered for the event, designed to encourage dialogue between students and faculty/staff members. My roommates in Sol Heumann Hall—Joshua Maugh of Oregon, Zoh Qureshi of Canada and Shon Lawrence of Georgia—were wonderful hosts, and I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with them.

January also marked the beginning of an important new initiative at NTID to aid members of the U.S. military who have suffered significant hearing loss as a result of exposure to gunfire and explosions during their service. The Military Veterans with Hearing Loss Project will allow these service members to earn bachelor's and/or master's degrees at RIT with access services and other support provided through NTID. We hope to welcome the first group of up to 10 veterans this fall. Visit <http://www.rit.edu/ntid/veterans> to learn more about this program.

In May, we watched with great pride as our talented students, faculty and staff participated in the second annual Imagine RIT Innovation and Creativity Festival. More than 25,000 people visited campus for a daylong celebration of our collective talents. RIT/NTID students truly shone. They are bright. They are creative. And they are RIT/NTID.

Our success belongs to everyone connected to this college. Thanks to all of you for sharing in it and contributing to it.

*Alan*

Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz  
NTID President  
RIT Vice President and Dean for NTID

# Transferring Success

by Ilene J. Avallone

Statistics show that nearly one-third of all college students nationwide attend more than one college in pursuit of an undergraduate degree. Despite extensive research into picking the “right” college, some college students find that the reality of the college they choose is not what they had expected, and decide that the right option for making them happy and successful is to transfer.

Staying close to home and participating in a good engineering program were the reasons Norb Biderman, 21, from Woodbury, Minn., first attended a university in his home state.

“However, two important things were missing from my education there,” says Biderman, now majoring in Mechanical Engineering Technology at RIT, “other deaf students, and the opportunity to engage in a cooperative education experience.

“RIT has proven to be a better choice for me,” he says. “I have so many wonderful friendships now with others like me who are deaf, and my co-op has given me real-world experience that prepares me for the workplace and that will give me a competitive edge in the job market after I graduate.”

Over the past three years, transfer students have represented about 18 percent of the total enrollment of deaf and hard-of-hearing students at RIT/NTID. Some come from two-year community colleges, others, like Biderman, from four-year universities, both public and private, throughout the United States and other countries. Some transfer because they are not satisfied with a college’s academics or support services, others are looking for a fresh start in a whole new field of study, and many are just trying to find the college with the right fit for them.

Shannon Tierney, 25, from Londonderry, N.H., started attending a community college.

“I wasn’t ready for a big university,



**Helping Steer the Way** NTID Associate Professor and Academic Advisor Sidonie Roepke (left) meets with Medical Illustration student Shannon Tierney. Roepke monitors Tierney’s academic progress and assists in planning her academic curriculum.

so I decided to take some courses at a community college in my hometown first to help me transition into college life,” she says. “But the college wasn’t right for me. I didn’t have an advisor, and as a result, I took classes with no clear direction towards a specific career

path. When I visited RIT, I was so impressed with its academic support services that I knew right away it would be the best place for me.”

Today, this Medical Illustration major is finding her studies challenging, but she’s succeeding in them because of the



A. SUE WEISLER

**Color Matching** Jon Paul Bonin, an Arts and Imaging Studies student with a concentration in graphic design, works on a project in his color management class.

support she receives from her advisor, professors and support services staff.

NTID's Counseling Department plays an important role in the success of deaf and hard-of-hearing transfer students like Tierney. Every transfer student is assigned a counselor who provides academic, career, personal and social counseling services.

"We work with them on a variety of issues—from adjustment to college life and choice of major to relationship concerns and family issues," says Robb Adams, counseling department chairperson.

"Succeeding in my challenging classes and being embraced by other deaf students have made my experiences here at RIT wonderful," says fourth-year Psychology major Sarah Gumpert, who spent two years at another university.

Because she was undecided on a major, Gumpert attended a university near home. But she found support services lacking, and she wanted to be with more deaf and hard-of-hearing students, so she transferred to RIT/NTID.

"The excellent support services and the many opportunities I've had to get involved on campus play an important part in my success and happiness here," she says.

All first-year students registered for NTID classes go through a two-week orientation called the Summer Vestibule

Program (SVP). Transfer students who attend the orientation are grouped together when possible to give them the opportunity to connect with other students who have had previous college experience.

"These transfer students bond quickly with each other, and we found this to be a good way to help make them feel more integrated right away into the RIT/NTID community," says Linda Bryant, SVP coordinator.

Jon Paul Bonin, from St. Louis, Mo., knew his best chance for career success was getting a college degree. But he didn't realize the impact that interpreters could have on his classroom success.

"At the college where I started, my interpreters were not familiar with the subject material," says Bonin. "As a result, they misused signs that were critical to the meaning of my lectures, and I became lost and confused."

Bonin transferred to RIT/NTID because of the support available to him here and the ease of communication on campus.

Many deaf and hard-of-hearing students cite RIT's interpreting and other access services as contributing factors in their decision to transfer here, and they note that the quality of access services has played a role in their success at RIT/NTID.

Stephen Nelson, director of access

services, explains that students are assigned interpreters who are skilled in the academic subject area for which they are providing interpreting.

"The average interpreter has more than 10 years of experience in their subject area, and our research and experience have shown this is a key to student success," he says. "No other university in the world provides the depth and variety of access and support services that we provide."

Biomedical Sciences major Jesus Colon, 23, wanted to stay close to home, so he began his first year of college in Rhode Island. Soon after, he learned from Vocational Rehabilitation about the financial support he would receive if he pursued his studies at RIT, so he decided to transfer and take advantage of the financial incentives. He says it was the best decision he made.

"The professors believe in my potential here and push me to do my best," explains Colon. "They provide encouragement and support, and they're helping me reach my dream of becoming a brilliant cardiologist, teacher or scientist someday."

"Faculty at RIT/NTID are engaged and committed to all of our deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and they are an important resource for them," says Dr. Laurie Brewer, vice dean and interim associate vice president for academic affairs at NTID. "They create environments that foster learning as well as student development, and they often build relationships with their students that last a lifetime."

There are many reasons why deaf and hard-of-hearing students transfer to RIT/NTID, and the result is the same for them as for those students who start their college careers here: they achieve their goals. In fact, deaf and hard-of-hearing students at RIT graduate at rates above the national averages for students in community colleges and other private four-year colleges, and are some of the most successful students at RIT.

"For more than 40 years, RIT has developed an environment that makes deaf students feel welcome, and this may be one of the biggest contributors to their success here," says Nelson.



# Peer-to-Peer Recruiting

by Kathy A. Johncox



**Spreading the Word** Using events like the NTID Job Fair, information sessions, other career fairs and one-on-one sessions, Amanda Massab (left) has connected with close to 1,000 students on campus this year.

When Amanda Massab opens the door to her office in the NTID Center on Employment, she stops being an RIT graduate student and becomes an on-campus recruiter for the United States Department of Defense (DoD).

Massab was selected to participate in the DoD's Student Training and Academic Recruitment (STAR) program, a one-year, peer-to-peer effort that employs a student to educate other students and alumni about DoD employment opportunities. RIT/NTID is one of only four colleges chosen by the DoD Recruitment Assistance Division of the Civilian Personnel Management Service to participate in this program.

"Our goal is to increase the number of employees with disabilities in our workforce by the year 2010," says Karen Hannah, supervisor, Human Resource Specialist and Hiring Heroes

Program Manager at the DoD, OSD Civilian Personnel Management Service Recruitment Assistance Division Defense Applicant Assistance Office.

"To help us do that, we decided to reach out to a great school with a great reputation. Having a recruiter on campus, a fellow student that other students feel comfortable talking to and asking questions of, is a great way to reach the best and the brightest."

Massab agrees. "Students would rather see a recruiter in person," she says. "E-mail is impersonal and not as effective."

"When the STAR program staff contacted us to interview students, Amanda's major and her career outlook made her a logical choice," says Dawn Lucas, Massab's NCE employment advisor. "With her bachelor's degree in Business Management and her current enrollment in evening classes in the master's degree program in Human

Resource Development, she had the right combination of skills, interest and available time."

To prepare for the job, Massab attended an intensive, week-long training program in Washington, D.C., and designed her own marketing plan, which includes holding office hours, attending social events on campus, making presentations to job search classes, creating flyers to post around campus and meeting with the NTID Student Government and Student Life Team.

"I explain to my fellow students that by working for the Department of Defense you can have a million different experiences, more than in a private company," says Massab. "The government pays for your education, you can locate anywhere, there are opportunities for promotion and you have job security."

So far, a number of students have expressed interest in this career path. Massab continues to follow up with them, advises them, alerts them to new job listings and helps them through the application process. She also keeps their resumes, so she can forward them to prospective supervisors when new government jobs are listed.

"Amanda is very poised, professional, outgoing and represents us well," says Hannah. "She and other on-campus recruiters benefit by going outside of their comfort zone, and they build written and presentation skills as they help students find jobs and apply."

A direct benefit to the on-campus student recruiters is that after graduation, if there is a job available with the federal government that matches their qualifications, they can apply and be hired without competition.

"Even though my supervisors are in Arlington, Va., and I am here, we communicate every day, and I feel very much a part of the team," says Massab. "For me right now, I feel that I am in the best of both worlds—job and school."

# Fast-track to a Career

by Kathy A. Johncox



A. SUE WEISER

**Precision Programming** Courtney Hisman, CIMT major, and Dr. Sidney McQuay, CIMT associate professor, discuss precision machining projects. Students learn to use state-of-the-art software to input mathematical equations to create precision parts for machines and tools.

Courtney Hisman discovered in high school that she loved working on cars.

“I love hands-on work, and when I learned about the associate degree program in precision machining at NTID, it offered opportunities to do what I love,” says Hisman, a second-year student from Groton, Conn.

“I was attending a junior college and wasn’t sure what field I wanted to pursue,” says Adriana Gaylord, from Houston, Texas. “Then I met someone in the machining program at NTID and decided to transfer.”

Both Hisman and Gaylord are Computer Integrated Machining Technology (CIMT) majors taking advantage of the associate degree programs at RIT/NTID that provide a fast track to a career. Career-focused associate degrees open doors and provide options for students who choose a hands-on field, and want to acquire good skills and begin using them at a job sooner rather than later.

In addition to the CIMT program,

students at RIT/NTID can pursue associate degrees in Applied Computer Technology, Arts and Imaging Studies, Accounting Technology, Administrative Support Technology, Automation Technologies-Robotics, Business Technology, Computer Aided Drafting Technology and Laboratory Science Technology. Graduates of these programs are lab technicians, computer support specialists, precision machine operators, engineering technicians and more.

United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projections indicate that students who graduate with an associate degree and move into jobs that require some education and training beyond high school, but less than a bachelor’s degree, will see job opportunities increase over the next 10 years. Industry analysts agree that education and training are lagging behind the labor supply of skilled workers. The Brookings Institute terms these “middle skills” jobs, and an associate degree plus the work skills gained on co-op give RIT/NTID

graduates the combination of education and skills that employers are seeking.

RIT/NTID associate degrees offer a fast track to successful careers in high demand fields. Students in the CIMT program, for example, are in demand before they graduate. Part of the reason, says Dr. Sidney McQuay, CIMT associate professor, is that, as is happening in many trades, baby boomer retirements are leaving behind a relatively inexperienced work force, and graduates with good skills and hands on training on up-to-date equipment are needed.

“This adds up to wonderful opportunities for graduates of our associate degree programs,” says McQuay. “Over the past several years, six of the CIMT students who completed co-ops at Rock Island Arsenal in Rock Island, Ill., have been offered permanent jobs.”

Today, the baby boomer retirement phenomenon is playing out over many employment markets, and graduates of career-focused programs can benefit. Research by the BLS shows that associate degree graduates are more likely to be employed and make more money than high school graduates (see chart on next page). Another plus is that students get to work on real life issues that are of interest to them.

“During my co-op last summer at the Naval Air Depot (NAVAIR) in Cherry Point, N.C., we made parts for planes,” says Hisman. “It was an amazing learning experience, and the job opportunities are wonderful.”

Graduates of RIT/NTID associate degree programs in Arts and Imaging Studies also are finding jobs.

“There is demand across the board from graphic design to print publishing to Web design work,” says Ken Hoffmann, department chairperson. “Industry outlook information indicates that changes in workflow and production, plus the addition of new technologies will require more people



in middle skills positions as baby boomers retire.”

Jonathon Warren, a 2005 graduate of the Digital Imaging and Publishing Technology program, is an engraver in the imaging department at the *Florida Times Union*. Warren, from Jacksonville, Fla., says, “The instruction and co-op experience I got at RIT/NTID, prepared me for my job.”

Graduates of RIT/NTID’s Business program are finding success as well. Don Petit-Homme, an Accounting Technology major, graduated last May. He currently is an accounting technician in the Cash Management and Revenue Branch of the Immigration Customs Enforcement at the Department of Homeland Security.

“Verifying, maintaining and reconciling accounts, interacting with vendors and financial analysts and preparing financial documents were accounting skills I took with me after completing my associate degree,” says Petit-Homme.

An associate degree was the key to success for Lori Poole, a Laboratory Science Technology (LST) graduate who completed her co-op as a forensic drug technician in the toxicology laboratory at the Monroe County Medical Examiner’s Office in Rochester, N.Y.



**Hands-on Experience** Lab technician Lori Poole (center) leads high school students through lab experiments during NTID’s Explore Your Future summer program.

Poole chose an associate degree because she wanted to experience the varied duties of a laboratory technician before she decided whether to go on for a bachelor’s degree.

“I enjoyed the hands-on work in biology and chemistry and loved analyzing experiments. Also, I could get a career sooner rather than later and support my family,” says Poole.

After graduation, Poole worked in the Medical Examiner’s Office, and later accepted a position as a lab technician in NTID’s LST program, where she loves the variety of the work and gets to use the biology, chemistry and analytical skills she learned at RIT/NTID.

As the chemistry of food, medicine and the environment all catch public attention, lab science technology graduates become the technicians who can perform the essential analyses to keep the public safe.

“The market is positive for our LST graduates, who learn on the same equipment currently used in industry and government,” says Todd Pagano, director of the LST program. “This gives our students a competitive edge for co-ops and jobs.”

Alumni and current students like Breanna Shartzter of Tucson, Ariz., a second-year student in Applied

Computer Technology, appreciate the advantages and opportunities of associate degrees.

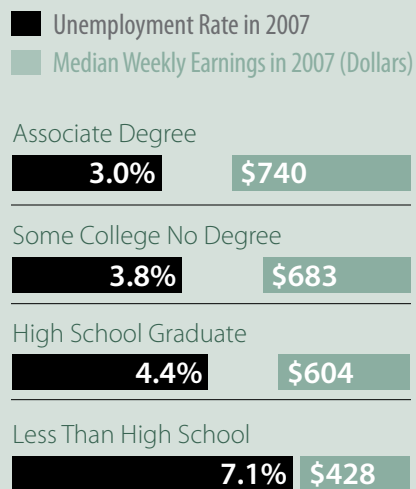
“When I was deciding on a major, I was fascinated by Web development,” says Shartzter. “I already had an interest in photography, and I could see myself creating a Website where I could sell my photos. I really enjoy it, but I want to take one step at a time—get my associate degree, then work for a while, then decide about going on for a bachelor’s degree.”

The bottom line for some students is the desire to get an education and get to work in a short period of time.

“From associate degree programs, students get the hands-on experience they need in class, complete a co-op and get real-world work experience for their resume,” says John Macko, director, NTID Center on Employment. “Then they can successfully market themselves as graduates with a degree plus work experience.”

“I chose to pursue an associate degree because I wanted to start working sooner,” says Petit-Homme. “Now, my employer offers business courses related to accounting, and I can choose to take courses online or attend class. My job is both fun and challenging, and my colleagues and I make a great team. I know I chose the right career path.”

## Education Makes a Difference



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

# Diversity Leads to Valuable Skill Development

by Susan L. Murad

“The benefit of our different cultures is to take what we know is good, and share with each other, not trying to convert, but giving strength.” —T. Jane Doctor, NTID Engineering Studies Department

A campus that is shared by people from various backgrounds provides a wealth of benefits to students, faculty, staff and the community at large. RIT works to provide outlets for all members of the campus community to celebrate their differences, and deaf and hard-of-hearing students find a variety of ways to share their history and culture—and in the process, gain valuable life skills.

## Student Life Team

The NTID Student Life Team plays a key role in helping students feel they are a valued part of the RIT/NTID community. They offer “cultural celebration weeks” that feature a series of presentations and workshops showcasing cultural diversity.

“The goals of the cultural celebration weeks are to empower the groups being highlighted and to educate the rest of campus so they gain a deeper understanding and respect for other cultures,” says SLT Director Karey Pine. “Students enjoy sharing their culture, and it helps them open up to other students. These activities prepare the way for them to become leaders.”

RIT/NTID’s support of student affinity groups such as Ebony Club, Caribbean Deaf Club, Asian Deaf Club, Hispanic Deaf Club and others creates a welcoming environment that encourages success for African-American, Latino American and Native American (AALANA) students.

“Members of the Student Life Team invite national and local AALANA leaders from different fields to present and interact with students as part of various cultural celebration weeks during the school year,” says Dr. Ellie Rosenfield, NTID associate dean for student and



**Sharing Traditions** Members of the Allegany River Indian Dancers from the Allegany Reservation demonstrate traditional dance during NTID’s Native American Cultural Heritage Week.

academic services. “This is one way to expose students to important role models and to educate our entire community.”

The diversity of the SLT staff also has a positive impact on students.

“When students see someone of a similar background in the SLT, they say, ‘This person is like me, this is a safe place, they get me,’” says Adrienne Morgan, NTID’s multicultural students program coordinator and Ebony Club advisor. “They can discuss issues they might be reluctant to share with others.”

## Reaching out to parents

Similarly, parents look to the staff as a resource.

“It really helps parents to meet Latino staff who speak their language and can help them understand that their child is not going to be alone,” explains Jeannette Vargas, senior staff assistant

in the NTID Development Office, who has been a co-advisor to the Hispanic Deaf Club for more than 10 years. “But I remind students and their parents that this is a time for growth and discovery, and they need to experience the successes and occasional failures of college life. Watching these students develop leadership skills and a deep appreciation for their culture is what keeps me motivated. They build confidence and become role models for their peers and their families.”

“We had a mother who was having a difficult time letting go of her student,” Morgan adds. “She expressed her fears by focusing on her worry that her child would not find the kind of ethnic foods here that are available at home. We assured her that there are many options for her child, which provided a feeling of comfort for her as a parent.”





**Celebration!** Members of the Hispanic Deaf Club gather for a year-end picnic.

### Enhancing student experiences

RIT/NTID helps students experience leadership as they arrange cultural events, ethnic dinners, celebrations and dances.

In 2010, Ebony Club will be celebrating 25 years of service to the NTID student community with a banquet that will bring together alumni and former members of the club.

“Events such as the Ebony Club Cookout and Phatsgiving, a community Thanksgiving dinner, help continue traditions that started 25 years ago,” Morgan says. “Mixing fun with learning where others come from is a great way to break down barriers.”

Along with many others on the RIT campus, AALANA clubs and organizations also give back to the community by sharing their cultural heritage and working to better the world around them.

“Helping students learn to serve those in need while developing leadership skills is essential to the education process,” says Lawrence LoMaglio, associate professor of English and Spanish and HDC co-advisor. “These student organizations participate in charitable work both on campus and in the Rochester community.”

Eric Cardenas, a first-generation American and the first in his family to attend college, is from McAllen, Texas, about 10 minutes from the Mexican border. He is president of NTID’s Hispanic Deaf Club and a third-year Applied Computer Technology student.

“Hispanic Deaf Club encourages me to focus on my academics and to empower others,” he says. “HDC also helps my personal growth by allowing me to build confidence, work with

others, improve my communication skills and more.”

Marisol Lopez Carino, who was born and raised in Brooklyn, N.Y., and is a fourth-year Human Resource Management student, agrees.

“HDC taught me to balance education and fun,” she says. “It also made me realize that I can participate in any organization—deaf or hearing. I currently am on the LaVoz executive board, a hearing organization whose mission is to bring all the Hispanic and Latino organizations on campus together.”

Faculty and staff also participate in celebrations of their heritage. RIT/NTID is fortunate to have Native American faculty and staff who generously share their culture and history.

“I have involved our students numerous times in my Native culture,” says T. Jane Doctor, senior mechanical technician in NTID’s Engineering Studies Department. “We have had students help the Native American Cultural Center with the ‘Adopt A Highway’ program. If there is an event at the nearby Ganondagan Native historic site, I invite students to attend. I talk about my culture with the students when asked, and am proud to share the Native American philosophy.”

Sandra Chrysler, teaching assistant in NTID’s Business Studies Department,

adds, “Our events are led by those of us who are Native Americans, but attendance is mostly non-Native students, faculty and staff. Many times, people tell me that they have Native American bloodlines and are interested in tracing their cultural heritage.”

“The response to Native American cultural events has been overwhelmingly positive,” says RIT interpreter Jonathan Hopkins. “On a campus where diversity is celebrated and the community is open, there is a desire to have more exposure, which allows me, as a Native American, to feel that strong connection in the place I work.”

For AALANA students, embracing and celebrating their cultural heritage with the campus community can eliminate isolation and allow for more interaction.

“Defining myself, as opposed to being defined by others, can be challenging,” says Fatiah Abimbola, a third-year Business Technology student from Chicago, Ill., and president of Ebony Club. “I have been involved in Ebony Club since my freshman year, and have learned so much about my place in the world. Today, I continue to grow and share what I’ve learned with the other members of the club. I realize it’s not all about me. I’m a better person because of these experiences.”



**Inspiration** Kelly Lenis (right), coordinator of student life programming at NTID, joins students, faculty and staff to watch the inauguration of President Barack Obama.

# Nelsy Carcamo

by Ilene J. Avallone



A. SUE WEISLER

**N**elsy Carcamo, 22, exudes confidence, optimism and ambition, but she didn't always feel this way.

"I was very shy and didn't have much confidence or many friends growing up," says the recent Laboratory Science Technology graduate, and current bachelor's degree student in the Environmental Studies program in RIT's College of Science.

Carcamo emigrated from Honduras to America in 1997 with her family in search of a better life. They settled in Mamaroneck, N.Y.

"My life growing up was not easy," she says. "Being immersed in a new culture, needing to learn English and adjusting to a progressive hearing loss was difficult."

Because of the challenges she's faced and met, Carcamo has a "can do" attitude and looks at challenges as new learning opportunities.

"You learn from your struggles, and they make you a stronger person," she says.

The first in her family to attend college, Carcamo says that RIT has changed her life.

"RIT/NTID is a special place for deaf and hard-of-hearing students—a place where you are warmly accepted and given many opportunities to reach your potential," she says.

"I love my major and appreciate the care and encouragement I receive from my teachers—they are like family and play a big part in my success here."

Carcamo received the "Most Outstanding Student in Chemistry Award" and the "Chemical Technology Student Recognition Award," both from the American Chemical Society. She won first place at RIT's Undergraduate Research Symposium last year, and presented her award-winning research at the National American Chemical Society Convention in Salt Lake City in April. She also recently was awarded a National Science Foundation Fellowship to continue research efforts on lung cancer.

When she finishes her bachelor's degree, she'd like to pursue a master's degree and perhaps a Ph.D. She hopes to work someday for the Environmental Protection Agency or to teach in Honduras.

# Jesse Naumann

by Kathy A. Johncox



A. SUE WEISLER

**R**ochester, N.Y., may be a long way from Tulsa, Okla., but to Jesse Naumann, 22, a first-year Arts and Imaging Studies (AIS) student, it's well worth the trip.

"I chose RIT/NTID because the college knows how to effectively help deaf and hard-of-hearing students learn," says Naumann, who transferred to RIT after attending colleges in his home state. "The faculty are experienced and give their best every day. It's been my experience that other colleges that have deaf programs are not really that effective in helping or teaching students with hearing loss."

Naumann started out in the Career Exploration Studies program, which is designed to help students sample different majors and settle on one that matches their interests. Now, he's thinking seriously about an animation major and is taking AIS courses to prepare for that path.

"I love to study pretty much anything," says this Dean's List student, "and animation gives me the chance to do

that and incorporate many subjects into my animation projects."

When he's not studying, you can find Naumann either practicing Capoeira, a combination of African and Brazilian martial arts, characterized by fluid, dance-like movements, or swimming, running, working out, drawing, reading, watching anime and the list goes on.

"I have multiple interests," he says. "I take Kung Fu now and would like to fit in some dance classes. I want to develop new interests and try new things and take advantage of the opportunity to have a fantastic experience here."

In fact, if Naumann had to describe RIT in one word, it would be "opportunity." After graduation, he looks forward to getting a job he enjoys, living in new and different places and traveling.

"I have many goals for the future," he says, "and I have many mottos and philosophical ideas about life. But the best wisdom I get is from what I learn for myself and from my grandpa who tells me 'do the best that you can do.'"



# Emily and Alyssa Schreiner

by Susan L. Murad

Sisters Emily and Alyssa Schreiner both chose RIT, but for different reasons. “RIT established a Biomedical Science program in the beginning of my freshman year, and it was exactly what I wanted,” says Emily, 21, now a third-year student in the program. “I also wanted to be with other deaf students and, at the same time, maintain my interaction with hearing students. Additionally, I received a full scholarship to attend.”

Biomedical Science provides a blend of research and working with people that appeals to Emily, and will prepare her to become either a medical examiner or a specialist in sports exercise.

“My research experiences have given me a look at what my future might be if I choose a laboratory career,” Emily explains. “I’m able to see the correlations between the classroom and real world, which will help me decide what I want to do after graduation.”

For Alyssa, 19, having Emily at RIT was a factor in attending, as was a strong deaf community and interpreting and notetaking

services. She also found two programs that appealed to her.

“RIT/NTID offers a master’s in education that will allow me to teach deaf and hard-of-hearing children as well as hearing students,” says the first-year student. “I want to teach American politics and history, so I picked a Public Policy major because it deals with politics and our government system, both of which fascinate me.”

The sisters from St. Louis, Mo., represent the third generation of their deaf family—they have deaf parents, sisters, aunts, an uncle, cousins, grandparents, great-aunts and -uncles. Their youngest sister, Rachel, who also is deaf, plans to attend RIT in fall 2009.

Both Emily and Alyssa find time to participate in intramural sports, including soccer, softball and ultimate Frisbee.

When asked how they would advise others, Emily suggests “students should know their priorities, since time management is so important.”

Alyssa agrees and recommends that students “balance their academic and social lives to be successful.”



A. SUE WESLER

# Fabian Wilks

by Ilene J. Avallone

Fabian Wilks saw RIT/NTID as the perfect fit for him.

Wilks, 26, was born in Jamaica. When he was 17 years old, he moved with his family to the Bronx in New York City. He started high school there, but transferred to the Model Secondary School for the Deaf in Washington, D.C. After graduating, Wilks studied accounting at LaGuardia Community College in New York City before transferring into RIT/NTID’s 2+2 program in Business.

“It’s a great environment here,” he says. “I like the mix of deaf and hearing students; that the college community is friendly, supportive and welcoming; and that communication is easy and accessible. I visited RIT/NTID four or five times before I transferred, and when I started here I already felt a strong bond to the college.”

Wilks says his studies keep him busy, but, as a people-oriented person, he really enjoys getting involved on campus. He is interim president of the Deaf International Students Association, a Big Brother to first-year students in NTID’s Business

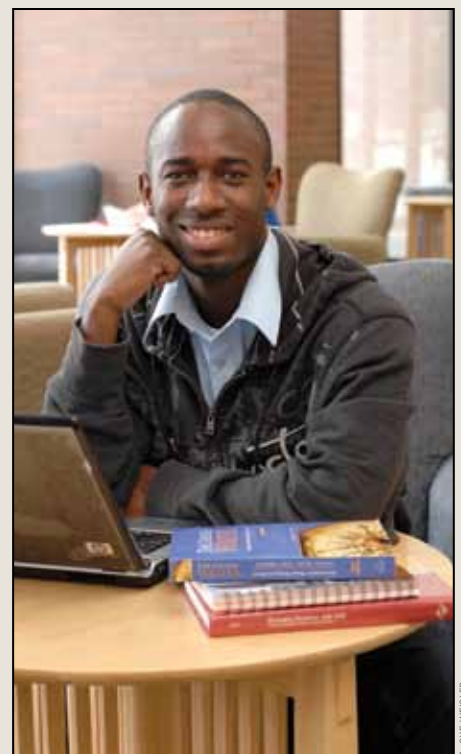
Studies program and an American Sign Language tutor for RIT/NTID interpreting students. He also plays soccer and likes to drive and take in the sights of Rochester.

A second-year student, Wilks recently transferred into RIT’s E. Philip Saunders College of Business, and is pursuing his bachelor’s degree in Management Information Systems.

Wilks hopes someday to own his own company and provide business-related services to deaf individuals. If his drive and ambition continue, he’ll turn that dream into a reality.

He takes his motto to heart: “If you struggle in life, you will be successful.”

Says Wilks, “My life has not been easy, but I’ve overcome difficult situations that I believe were instrumental to who I am today: a strong, determined and happy person who is successfully pursuing my dreams.”



A. SUE WESLER



VICTOR VALDEZ

**Resources Galore** This panoramic photo shows the various resources available to students in the NTID Learning Center: tutoring areas, study areas, smart classrooms and the Sprint Relay Lab.

# Center Fosters Out-of-Class Learning

by Kathy A. Johncox

Students looking for a place to study, finish a project, make a video, borrow a laptop, use a computer with special software related to their majors, talk to an employment advisor about their job search or get help in specific subjects from faculty or peer tutors, need look no farther than the NTID Learning Center.

Established in 1996, the NLC has two goals—to support the academic success of RIT/NTID students, and to experiment with instructional and access technologies to support learning. The NLC is constantly evolving to keep pace with what is current and cutting edge in educational technology today.

“In college, a lot of important learning goes on outside of regular classroom hours,” says Dr. Jeff Porter, chairperson, NTID Learning Consortium. “This out-of-class learning in the NLC helps students get the most out of their RIT/NTID education.”

“The NLC has many resources that help me succeed academically,” says Randal Jackson, a second-year Fine Arts Studio major from Memphis, Tenn. “Where else on campus can you find one place that has it all? The NLC is a unique place.”

Specific areas of the NLC are dedicated to video production, Webcam and video-phone communication technologies, group study and classroom space.

Numerous tutoring areas are available with tutoring services offered by faculty and/or peers as well as Web-based tutorials in English and math—all popular services in the NLC.

“I have used both peer and faculty tutors,” says Jackson. “The English tutors are particularly good, helping me with grammar errors and explaining why something is wrong, and what I can do to keep from making the same mistake again.”

In the video production room, students find the equipment and assistance to create video files to fulfill homework assignments. Some videotape themselves to practice a classroom presentation, others use the facilities to create videoblogs for class assignments.

The most recent addition to the NLC, made possible in 2007 through a grant from the Sprint Foundation, has been the Sprint Relay Experimental Learning/Access Demonstration Lab. NTID instructors can use videoconferencing to invite remote guest lecturers and panelists to their classes, and classes can be video-captured, archived and made accessible to students literally anytime, anywhere. Last year there was a distance learning course on Web design being offered simultaneously to six students on-site in the NLC and an equal number in Mumbai, India. More such courses

are planned for the future.

In keeping with the high-tech, customer service orientation of the NLC, there is an electronic suggestion box on every computer desktop. Last year, more than 400 students participated in an annual online satisfaction survey to give feedback about NLC services and technologies, and rated the NLC as being very important to their college success.

“It is said that some of the best teachers are the best learners,” says Porter. “At the NLC, we are dedicated to keep learning how to do it better.”

## Resources available in the NLC:

- General computer area with wireless technology
- Laptop loan program (daytime and overnight)
- Video resource and production facilities
- Tutoring services in a variety of curricular areas
- Individual and group student work area and small classrooms
- Educational workshops that address skills, knowledge and attitudes important for success in college and beyond
- Sprint Relay Experimental Distance Learning/Access Demonstration Lab



# Advisory Group Lends Support

by Kathleen S. Smith

The backgrounds and experiences of the 16 current members of NTID's National Advisory Group represent a rich diversity, the breadth and depth of which reflect the evolution of the group since it was formed at the request of the federal government in 1965.

NAG's original charge was to advise NTID leaders in carrying out the basic policies governing the college's establishment and operation. Forty-some years ago, that meant offering counsel on issues associated with creating a first-of-its-kind college for deaf students on the campus of a university planned principally for hearing students. Early NAG groups comprised mainly hearing male educators and government officials. Not so today. The current group includes men and women who are hearing and deaf. They are lawyers, entrepreneurs and business executives from technology-related fields, secondary education, fine arts, the automotive industry and the federal government. Members usually serve four-year terms and the group always includes at least one RIT/NTID alumnus and a majority representation of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

One of NAG's responsibilities is to advise NTID officials on topics related to student affairs, outreach and research. NAG member Richard Burkhauser, professor of policy analysis at Cornell University, is a noted authority on the economics of disability. The data he collects for NTID related to employment and disability is used for NTID's Annual Report and in conversations between institute officials and members of Congress.

Burkhauser says that meeting with students, faculty and administrators has personalized his data and provided him with insight "into how public policies aimed at integrating deaf students into all aspects of life in America are succeeding." He recently spoke about his research efforts to



**NTID's National Advisory Group** Current members include, seated from left, Scot Atkins, Andrew Brenneman, Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, Thomas Samuels and Richard Burkhauser. Standing, from left, are Angel Ramos, Lauren Lercher, Catherine Hunt, Annette Reichman, Claudia Gordon, Timothy McCarty, Sarah Weiner, Marilyn Smith, Jon Levy and Harold Mowl. Missing from photo are K. Todd Houston and Susan Salvador.

members of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, giving him yet another opportunity to share "the NTID story."

NAG members also help with recruitment, placement and outreach efforts. No one enjoys this charge more than NAG member Jon Levy, principal of the Orange County Department of Education Regional Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program in California. Levy has brought numerous NTID outreach programs and workshops to schools in Southern California and sends his students to NTID's summer outreach programs and competitions every year. He has visited NTID students on co-op assignments in the California area, and speaks to student groups both in California and on the RIT campus. He also has shared information regarding high school students' technical skills and teacher training needs with NTID personnel to help with recruitment efforts.

Providing advice on employment opportunities and trends takes on new meaning for NTID students when delivered by NAG member Claudia Gordon, senior policy advisor for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Gordon's 2008 talk, open to the RIT community, *Individual Rights, Personal*

*Responsibilities and You*, hit a chord with students, many of whom remember Gordon, a Howard University graduate not too far removed from her days as a student leader and standout athlete at the Lexington School for the Deaf.

While Gordon says that being part of NAG fulfills her obligation to be a role model, she also simply likes giving back to young deaf people.

The same could be said for NAG Chair Andrew Brenneman, an RIT/NTID alumnus and two-term NAG member. Brenneman believes so deeply in NTID's mission that, despite his demanding schedule as a senior national account executive for Sprint Nextel, he spends several weeks each year speaking at alumni events and presenting workshops at NTID. He also advises incoming students, offers job tips to graduates and uses his position as the first deaf member of RIT's Board of Trustees to create awareness of NTID to wider external audiences, another expectation of NAG members.

Collegiate loyalty is the core of Brenneman's commitment.

"RIT/NTID is dear to my heart because both my wife and I are graduates," he says. "My success is NTID's success."

# “First Class” Alumnae

by Susan L. Murad



A. SUE WESLER

**Truly First Class** Enjoying some time together are Leslie Taylor, Carol Convertino and Marie Bernard Case. Missing from photo is Cynthia Barrett Gilchrist.

**R**IT/NTID has the distinction of offering the country’s first sign language interpreting degree program, and four alumnae from the first graduating class in 1983 still work at RIT. Each had distinct and personal reasons to pursue interpreting as a career—but all have experienced benefits beyond their expectations.

“When I was 9 years old, my mother and I read a book about Helen Keller,” says interpreter Leslie Taylor, who provides interpreting support for students in the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences (CIAS). “We memorized the fingerspelling alphabet, and would sometimes turn the lights off and fingerspell into each other’s hands. That story had a huge impact on my decision to go into the field.”

After completing a bachelor’s degree in Education Speech Pathology and Audiology at SUNY Fredonia, Taylor looked at NTID’s program as a way to earn more skills.

“I spoke to NTID program founder Alice Beardsley who encouraged me to apply. After graduation, I started working at RIT, and I’m still here!”

“I learn something new all the time and that keeps my job fresh,” she says. “I love

the language, the people that I’ve met and being part of the educational process.”

For Carol Convertino, inspiration came in spring 1981, after she earned a bachelor’s degree in Communication from SUNY Brockport.

“At the time, my sister, Barbara Arnone, was a sign language interpreter at RIT, and she encouraged me to apply to the new degree program,” she says. “I had taken two sign language courses at Brockport, which were coordinated by Doni LaRock, who became my manager when I was hired at NTID.”

According to Convertino, now a research associate in RIT/NTID’s Center for Education Research Partnerships, no two days are the same for an interpreter.

“Working in the classroom, I appreciated being exposed to a variety of topics,” she says. “I often wished I could retain all the information I was interpreting. I worked mostly in CIAS and I had the opportunity to interpret for well-known photographers and designers.”

Convertino’s experiences as an interpreter led to her interest in research.

“My classroom experiences motivated me to earn a degree in NTID’s Master of

Science in Secondary Education program for Students who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing and conduct educational research,” she says.

Cynthia Barrett Gilchrist didn’t have to travel far for inspiration. She had earned a bachelor’s degree at Sarah Lawrence College and was at RIT earning her master’s degree in Photography when she registered for a free American Sign Language class.

“I had seen students signing on campus and was fascinated by it,” says Gilchrist, an interpreter who works on the Science and Engineering core team. “I went from free classes to the interpreter training program, and here I am!”

She has interpreted for the Rev. Jesse Jackson and poet Alan Ginsberg, and says live comedy, music and poetry are her forte.

“It takes quick thinking because of the timing and use of spoken English idioms,” she explains. “I enjoy the synergy that happens when I’m in sync with the performer and the audience is responding.”

Senior Interpreter Marie Bernard Case tried several majors in college before settling on English Literature at Binghamton University, with an eye toward law school. Like Convertino, she began following a new path in 1981.

“That year, I attended a performance of the touring group Sunshine Too and was mesmerized,” she explains. “If they were from RIT, it was the place for me!”

She set aside plans for law school and joined RIT’s Department of Interpreting (now Access) Services.

“In addition to the classroom, I have interpreted underwater for scuba classes, on frozen slopes for downhill skiing classes, in the saddle for horseback riding classes, and for three Presidents of the United States,” she says.

Case counts the visit of Jehan el Sadat, widow of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, and international travel as the highlights of her time at RIT/NTID.

“I have loved my experiences at RIT/NTID,” she says. “I couldn’t ask for a better place to learn and grow.”

For all four of these “first class” alumnae, it’s the people, language and culture that keep their work interesting.



# Chris Wagner Receives Distinguished Alumni Award

by Susan L. Murad



COURTESY OF CSDVRS, LLC

**Chris Wagner**

**C**hristopher Wagner, SVP '86, '94, is the 2009 RIT Distinguished Alumni Award winner. Given annually, the award recognizes a deserving graduate of RIT/NTID. Alumni

selected for the award are highly successful in their chosen field of study or career, are actively involved in and contribute to the betterment of the deaf community, and promote school spirit among RIT/NTID alumni.

"I'm truly honored to be selected for this distinguished award," says the Bradenton, Fla., resident. "RIT/NTID has made a significant impact on my life and my career, and I could not be more proud of being an alumnus

of this extraordinary university."

Wagner is vice president of Marketing for CSDVRS, LLC. He previously was a consultant and executive director of Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Manatee and Sarasota Counties, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service of Pasco and Hernando Counties.

With a degree in social work from RIT's College of Liberal Arts and a background in healthcare administration, Wagner has used his considerable skills to improve life for deaf and hard-of-hearing people. He was responsible for the implementation of the first deaf assisted-living facility and nursing facility in Florida. Largely responsible for the creation of the Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Wagner was appointed

by former governor Jeb Bush as the council's first member and chairperson. He also has served on numerous boards, including Florida Association of the Deaf, Inc., serving as president for four years, and as vice chair of the Governor's Americans with Disabilities Act Working Group. He was the first president of the Florida Coalition for Disability Rights.

Currently, he's on the board of directors of the National Association of the Deaf as vice president and is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind.

Wagner has received many awards for his leadership and advocacy on both state and national levels.

He enjoys spending time with his wife, Staci '92, and their two children, Justin and Lauren.

# Mary Jane Hellyar Scholarship

by Susan L. Murad



COURTESY OF EASTMAN KODAK INC.

**Mary Jane Hellyar**

**A**s president of the Film, Photofinishing and Entertainment Group and Executive Vice President of Eastman Kodak Company, Dr. Mary Jane Hellyar has been a leader and visionary

for innovation and technology within her company. As a long-time member of the NTID Foundation Board of Directors, and as the board's chairperson since 2004, she has seen first-hand the importance of scholarships to deaf and hard-of-hearing students at RIT/NTID.

Now Hellyar has combined her passion for the sciences and her dedication to education by establishing the Mary Jane Hellyar Endowed Scholarship Fund. The fund will provide scholarship support to deaf and hard-of-hearing women studying in RIT/NTID's Laboratory Science Technology (LST) program and planning to transfer to any of the STEM

(science, technology, engineering or mathematics) programs at RIT.

"I'm very excited to create this scholarship because it will promote two constituencies for whom I have a lot of passion—women pursuing careers in science and technology, and the deaf and hard-of-hearing students at RIT/NTID," Hellyar says. "This is one way I can give back and make a difference, by encouraging future women scientists and engineers to pursue their dreams and accomplish big things. NTID students consistently inspire me with their positive, can-do attitude and their strong work ethic. I have every confidence they will dream big and achieve remarkable outcomes."

Hellyar received a bachelor's degree in chemistry and mathematics from the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minn., and master's and doctoral degrees in chemical engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, as well as an MBA in the Management of Technology from the Sloan School at

MIT. She began her career at Eastman Kodak Company in 1982 as a research scientist in the Kodak Research Laboratories, holding various positions within the company before being named to her current position in 2007.

"Increased emphasis and employment in STEM-related fields are critical to this country's ongoing competitive advantage," says Dr. Vince Daniele, chairperson of the NTID Department of Science and Mathematics. "This scholarship will allow our female students to participate fully in terms of capability, mentorship and financial support."

"Having worked closely with LST Program Director Todd Pagano to develop this scholarship, I'm impressed by the quality of the program and Professor Pagano's commitment to his students," says Hellyar. "With the financial support provided by this scholarship, I'm hopeful that more female students at NTID will have the tools to succeed in STEM careers."

# Catherine Clark

by Ilene J. Avallone



A. SUE WEISLER

Dr. Catherine Clark walks around campus with a smile on her face. An assistant professor, audiologist and coordinator of the cochlear implant program in NTID's Department of Communication Studies and Services, Clark, who's been at RIT/NTID for 23 years, provides speechreading and auditory training, performs hearing evaluations and services related to cochlear implants, facilitates RIT/NTID's Cochlear Implant Support Group and co-teaches a black history course.

"The dual role of clinician and teacher at RIT/NTID has provided me with unique experiences as an audiologist," says Clark, who earned a bachelor's degree in speech and hearing services from Bradley University, a master's degree in audiology from the University of Louisville, and completed her clinical fellowship at the House Ear Institute in Los Angeles where she worked in the children's cochlear implant program. This past winter she received her clinical doctorate in audiology (Au.D.) from Salus University.

"I'm happiest when I'm working with my students, and striving to be at the forefront of new technological advancements related to communication, hearing aids and cochlear implants," she says.

Her professional accomplishments include co-developing (with NTID Audiologist Dr. Donald Sims) a new auditory training program for students with cochlear implants, receiving the Award of Excellence from NTID's Deaf Professional Group for her ongoing commitment to deaf and hard-of-hearing people, and winning a Glover-Crask Charitable Trust Grant to purchase \$10,000 of cochlear implant mapping equipment.

Outside of RIT/NTID, Clark enjoys interacting with the African-American deaf community, which has resulted in enriching experiences, such as serving as a Big Sister for nearly 10 years.

Clark says every day at RIT/NTID brings her new opportunities and experiences that are very gratifying.

"I'm always smiling because I'm so happy working at this magical place," she says.

# Christopher Kurz

by Ilene J. Avallone



A. SUE WEISLER

"RIT/NTID has a special place in my heart," says Dr. Christopher Kurz, "and my decision to teach here was two-fold: so that I could give back to the college that gave me so much, and be a role model for other deaf people like me."

Kurz, who graduated from RIT in 1995 with a bachelor's degree in Applied Mathematics, is an assistant professor in the Master of Science program in Secondary Education of Students who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. For the past five years, Kurz has been challenging his graduate students to go beyond their limits, and providing them with diverse perspectives on world topics.

"I want to be a driving force in raising the bar for students in the field of deaf education," he says. "I'm a product of deaf education, so it's important for me to be a catalyst in educating and preparing the next generation of teachers of the deaf."

Kurz received an M.S.Ed. in deaf education and a Ph.D. in foundations of education, both from the University of Kansas. For his doctorate, he was able to merge his love of philosophy and history with his passion

about the theories of learning in the areas of math and science. He is a classic example of the unique faculty at RIT/NTID.

Working with NTID's Pre-College Outreach Consortium, Kurz has been instrumental in developing and leading RIT/NTID's National Science Fair and assisting with the MATHCOUNTS® program for middle school students.

This married father of four young boys admits balancing work and family can be challenging, and credits the support of his wife with his success in maximizing his time with both.

Kurz enjoys watching his sons play hockey, going snowshoeing and playing racquetball and tennis. He collects works of deaf artists, and is an experienced photographer.

Kurz's role model is Benjamin Franklin, who said, "All mankind is divided into three classes: those that are immovable, those that are moveable, and those that move."

"In my life I choose to pursue the third option," says Kurz. "My goal is to stimulate my students to move the world; they are our future."



# Congratulations Class of 2009!

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A. SUE WESLER

**Proud Graduate** Nathaly Mendez, of Woodbridge, Va., who graduated this May with an associate degree in Business, was selected as NTID's 2009 commencement delegate. The recipient of an Ohringer Scholarship as well as NTID Vice President and Dean and NTID Merit scholarships, Mendez has been on the Dean's List every quarter. She volunteers for the Big Brother/Big Sister mentoring program through the NTID Business Studies Department and is leading a group of students to establish an NTID Business Club. She works as an accounting tutor in the NTID Learning Center and plans to complete a B.S. in Accounting at RIT's Saunders College of Business.

In her commencement address, Mendez told fellow graduates, "It's hard to believe that we're here, with diplomas in our hands. It is our first step into the real world. It feels like yesterday when we entered RIT. You did what many people did not think you could do. With a lot of faith, hard work, motivation and encouragement, you were able to accomplish your goal."

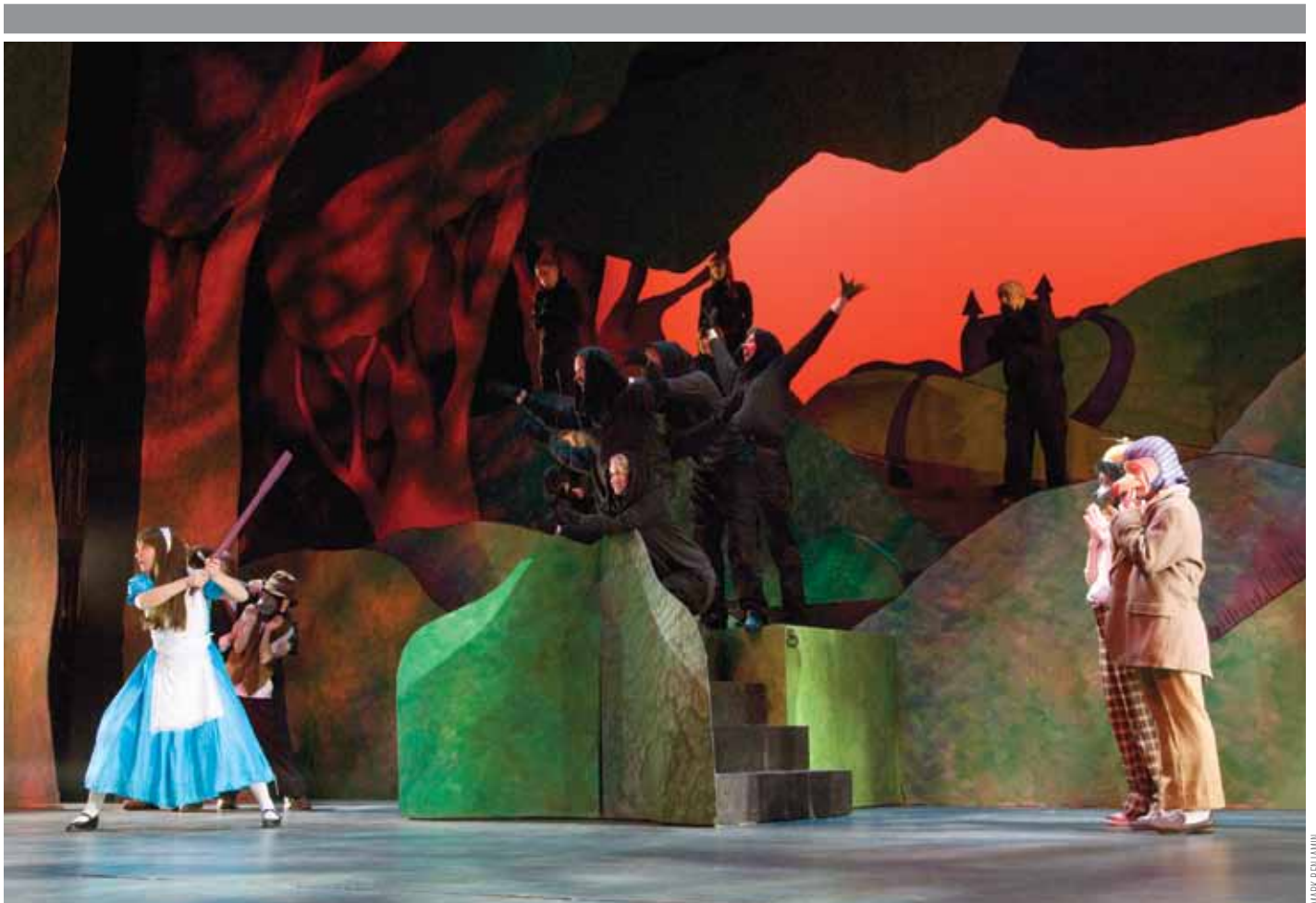
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**A Wonderland Comes to Life** NTID Performing Arts presented *Alice in Wonderland* this spring. Based on the stories of Lewis Carroll, directed by Jim Orr and choreographed by Thomas Warfield, both of NTID's Cultural and Creative Studies Department, the performance featured magical special effects and stunning visuals that brought to life a fantastic world of make-believe. The production was performed simultaneously in American Sign Language by deaf actors and in spoken English by hearing actors, and featured special guest appearances by dancers from the RIT/NTID Dance Company.

MARK BENJAMIN