

# CRAVEN

COMMUNITY COLLEGE MAGAZINE



2024



*ON THE COVER: Craven CC's mascot learns his new moniker during a name-revealing event in October 2023. Welcome to the Craven family, Blaze!*

**EDITOR**  
Craig Ramey

**WRITERS**  
Holly Desrosier  
Craig Ramey

**DESIGNER**  
Holly Desrosier

**PHOTOGRAPHERS**  
Holly Desrosier  
Craig Ramey  
Zaneta Will

**CONTRIBUTORS**  
Jennifer Baer  
Christina Bowman-Murray  
Fernanda Marinkovic  
Amber Smith  
Dr. Ray Staats  
Charles Wethington

# A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

This past year, we celebrated the success of the 618 graduates in the Class of 2024, many of whom walked across the stage during our 57th annual Commencement exercises in May. For them, new doors are opened and they are now embarking on new or enhanced careers, pursuing additional career skills at the College, or have transferred to a university to earn a baccalaureate degree.

Throughout this year's magazine, you'll read stories about the success of our students and graduates. You'll learn about a wide variety of academic initiatives currently underway—they include new programs in Surgical Technology, Night/Weekend Licensed Practical Nursing, Massage Therapy, Engineering, and Environmental Services. At the Volt Center, we are readying the new Small Business Center Generator and the Heavy Equipment Operator program.

Last spring, we proudly rededicated the former Business & Information Technology building as Harold H. Bate Hall in recognition of the Bate Foundation's continuing multi-million-dollar scholarship support of our students. Architectural design is underway for a new 30-acre campus which will be located in the Craven County Industrial Park, six miles northeast of the main campus. The Public Safety Training Center will host a variety of first responder education and training programs. During the forthcoming year we will also begin construction of the multi-purpose Corporate Training Center on the New Bern Campus.

We are a flexible, agile, and responsive institution that is ready to meet the current and emerging needs of an extraordinarily diverse student body. We embrace a culture where each student is welcomed as a respected individual having unique abilities and aspirations, and we eagerly "carry them as far as they can go" toward a lifetime of learning and opportunity.

The 2024-2025 academic year is beginning at Craven Community College, bringing with it the inspiring potential to build on the impressive institution we have evolved for the past six decades. The forthcoming year will conclude with the 60th anniversary of the College's chartering as the Craven Industrial Education Center by the North Carolina General Assembly. We will commemorate this anniversary throughout the year with special events for students, staff, faculty, alumni, and the community. Make sure to follow our social media pages for updates on events to join us in celebrating a year of "Deep Roots, Strong Futures."

As our great institution nears its 60th anniversary, I want to personally thank you for being a part of our ongoing journey. Together, we are making a positive difference in the lives of countless individuals and strengthening our community.

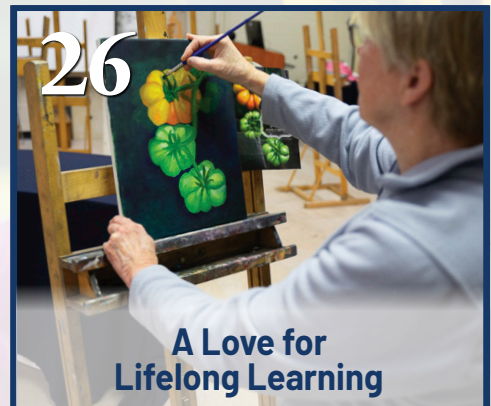
**DR. RAY STAATS**  
PRESIDENT



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# news briefs

COLLEGE HAPPENINGS

## Building Dedicated in Memory of Late College Donor Harold H. Bate

Craven CC honored the late philanthropist Harold H. Bate by dedicating and renaming a building in his honor on Feb. 20. Formerly known as the Business & Information Technology (BIT) building, it was officially named Bate Hall following a resolution adopted by the Craven CC Board of Trustees on Oct. 17, 2023. Bate's exceptional generosity and steadfast commitment to education has benefitted the College for nearly 30 years.

The Harold H. Bate Foundation, a nonprofit organization deeply rooted in supporting education and community development across Craven, Pamlico, and Jones counties, has played a fundamental role in enhancing the College's resources and educational programs.

Beginning with a charitable donation of more than \$95,000 in 1996, two years before the Foundation was formed, Bate's dedication to fostering educational excellence has left a lasting impression on the College and the community.



*Pictured left to right: Craven CC Executive Director of Institutional Advancement Charles Wethington, Bate Foundation Board members Gary Baldree and Bob Mattocks, Bate Foundation Board President Don Brinkley, Craven CC President Dr. Ray Staats, and Bate Foundation members Si Seymour, Benny Mullinix, and Dave Hinson.*

To date, the **Bate Foundation** has donated **over \$3.2 million** to Craven CC

## Craven CC Hosts 44th Annual 'Visions Beyond Barriers' Prison Art Show

In a celebration of creativity and second chances, Craven CC hosted the 44th annual North Carolina Prison Art Show, themed "Visions Beyond Barriers." The exhibition was held April 22-May 3 and featured artworks from incarcerated individuals across the state. The creations, which included an assorted offering of watercolor paintings, intricate drawings, and mixed-media designs, inspired visitors with their diversity and depth.

Several Craven CC students, employees, and community members attended the show and cast votes for their favorite works in each category, including People's Choice and Best of Show. This annual event, held in conjunction with Second Chance Month, also included community resources and a display from the Craven-Pamlico Re-Entry Council.



*Craven CC hosted the 44th annual North Carolina Prison Art Show April 22-May 3. The exhibition, themed "Visions Beyond Barriers," featured artworks from incarcerated individuals across the state.*

## Craven CC Hosts Statewide 'Pathways to Progress' Summit

The College's Center for Teaching & Learning hosted a higher education conference called "Pathways to Progress: Community College Summit" in March. This two-day event brought together over 100 education leaders, instructors, and support services teams from multiple states to network and learn how to use research-based, high-engagement practices for teaching and learning to intentionally build student agency, grit, involvement, self-reflection, social integration, and self-awareness.

The event featured speakers and sessions focused on leadership, instruction, guided pathways, and student support services by highlighting emerging and proven best practices for holistic student success. Dr. Lane Freeman, Director of Online Learning for the North Carolina Community College System, was the keynote speaker, and several Craven CC faculty and staff members presented.

Sessions explored the rapidly developing role of artificial intelligence (AI) in education, and attendees got hands-

on experience with demonstrations using virtual reality (VR) equipment to explore active learning strategies. Discussions covered a range of topics, including dismantling stereotypes through culturally aware teaching, using VR for career exploration and skill development, and maximizing student engagement through innovative, AI-powered tools.



*Participants interact during a session at the Pathways to Progress summit. The event prompted collaboration among higher education employees and allowed them to gain fresh insights on elevating student success.*

## New Mascot Blazes onto Campus

A new Craven CC mascot blazed onto the scene in a fiery reveal last October. After Knight the Panther's well-deserved retirement following a decade of service, Blaze has stepped up to become the College's official mascot. Donning a green Craven CC jersey and a striking blue coat, Blaze radiates school spirit. Following a months-long naming contest last October, Blaze officially took center stage as has quickly become a familiar and beloved figure across campus. You'll likely spot him prowling around at events, spreading panther pride and forging friendships with students and employees.



## State Budget Provides \$12M for Public Safety Training Center

Craven CC unveiled plans for a state-of-the-art Public Safety Training Center (PSTC) during a special event held at the Craven County Industrial Park on Oct. 30. The announcement drew a crowd of community members, media representatives, college officials, state legislators, and local government leaders.

College President Dr. Ray Staats kicked off the event by sharing that \$12 million in legislative funding had been secured, alongside the acquisition of 30 acres of land, to build the PSTC. This dedicated facility will serve Eastern North Carolina by providing comprehensive training for firefighters, law enforcement personnel, EMS workers, and all other first responders.

"This has been something that's been coming for more than 20 years," explained Staats. "With the help of our legislative delegation, our Craven County commissioners, the City of New Bern, and a host of partners, we finally got all the pieces together. We'll be building a Public Safety Training Center to train entry-level and skilled-level folks in all of the various emergency services."

Plans for the facility officially took a step forward in November 2022, when Craven CC and the Craven County government collaborated to lease the land that will be developed into the PSTC. On Oct. 4, the 2023-2024 biennial budget became law. Among the provisions were \$12 million in special allocation to Craven CC for capital improvements and equipment for the PSTC.

"This legislature decided that we were going to invest heavily in rural infrastructures, in rural community colleges, in rural economic development, and we did so," said State Representative Steve Tyson. "I was on the county board many, many years ago talking about what could be done with this property, and while I applauded the vision of the volunteer fire departments, we didn't think they were ever going to be able to have sustainability to build something out here and keep it alive. That's where this facility will come into play."

Nearly 1,700 Craven County public safety personnel will benefit from this centralized training hub. It will address the annual training requirements for most public safety professionals and provide additional specialized training opportunities. By investing in the PSTC, Craven County aims to enhance public safety, ensure a highly trained staff, and improve employee retention rates.

The PSTC is expected to include a 20,000-square-foot shell building, vehicle driving range with skid pad, two-story residential burn building, four-story drill tower, exterior burn area, drafting pit, hazardous waste training area, indoor firearms training facility/shooting range, and vehicle extrication pad.



**Pictured left to right: Senator Jim Perry, Craven CC President Dr. Ray Staats, State Representative Celeste Cairns, and State Representative Steve Tyson.**

### Existing programs that will increase their capacity by operating at the PSTC:

- Craven County Fire Academy
- CDL Truck Driver Training
- Motorcycle Safety
- Basic Law Enforcement Training
- Department of Public Safety
- Drone Training
- Confined Space Training
- EMS/EMT
- Hazardous Waste
- Heavy Equipment Operations

## Community Events Encourage Science Exploration for All Ages

The College hosted several events during the first half of 2024 that showcased the wonders of science. On March 21, physics instructor Robert Seip held The Great American Eclipse lecture, where he discussed the moon and its shadow as it traversed the North American continent. Two days later, the Havelock campus held an event called “Spring Showers Bring STEM Powers” with hands-on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) activities for the whole family, including color-changing slime, self-inflating balloons, mystery scents, and digs for shark teeth.

In April, community members gathered at Flanners Beach for a Star Party, during which Seip held two more lectures about the night sky and invited attendees to observe it through telescopes. The College also presented “The State of Innovation” STEM Night as an official event of the 2024 North Carolina Science Festival. Activities included self-inflating balloons, assembling an automation, light-up badges, and thermochromic slime.

In conjunction with the NC Science Festival, Fleet Readiness Center East, and NC State University, Craven CC also participated in an Ultimate Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Competition in Newport. To inspire the next generation of STEM professionals, participants designed unmanned aerial vehicles for a competition in which they were evaluated for speed and maneuverability.



**Community members of all ages enjoy science events and activities on both Craven CC campuses.**

## Celebrating Black History Month

On Feb. 7, Craven CC celebrated Black History Month with an event titled “Living the Legacy of METCO—Exploring Brown v. Board of Education.” This decision served as a cornerstone to the civil rights movement by ending legal segregation in public schools in 1954. The event was hosted by Dialogues on Diversity, a social justice and diversity theater company that uses theatrical models to deliver messages on difficult and complicated issues.



**Ron Jones, executive director of Dialogues on Diversity, speaks during the College’s Black History Month event.**

# COMMUNITY FABRIC AWARDS

The Community Fabric Awards hosted its 14th annual ceremony at the Riverfront Convention Center of Craven County on April 23 to a crowd of more than 400 people. Presented by the Craven Community College Foundation, the CFAs recognize individuals and businesses that have shown outstanding initiative, impact of service, and inspiration of others.



**LINDA MacDONALD**  
Individual Leadership Award

Linda MacDonald graduated from UNC Greensboro and worked in critical care for many years. While preparing to attend ECU to continue her nursing education, she decided to pursue restaurant ownership. She and her husband purchased what is now known as The Chelsea Restaurant in downtown New Bern and quickly became involved in organizations such as Swiss Bear. Linda partnered with other organizations to form the Downtown Business and Professional Association, which helped spur the downtown revitalization initiative. She worked closely with Empty Bowls and served as president of the Craven Arts Council Board. She also served as interim executive director of the Craven CC Foundation, as well as president of the Board of Directors for several years, and is now a director emeritus. While she has had a profound impact on local organizations, she believes that anyone can be part of something great if they put their mind to it.



**INTERNATIONAL PAPER**  
Elena Sanders, New Bern Mill Manager  
Business Leadership Award

International Paper (IP) has been active in the New Bern community for 55 years. The company transforms renewable resources into absorbent pulp, which is then used in everyday items such as diapers, feminine care products, and more. IP's corporate headquarters provides a budget for each mill to give to community causes, including hunger, health and wellness, disaster relief, and education. One of its nationally recognized initiatives is preparing FemCare kits, which are donated to local schools to help combat period poverty. In addition, IP sponsors Craven CC's Panther Pantry, a resource that provides students in need with access to food, personal care items, and childcare essentials. New Bern Mill Manager Elena Sanders also encourages employees to get involved in the community by volunteering for local causes during work hours. IP exemplifies leadership by ensuring all employees receive the training and tools needed to invest in themselves and the community.



**EDDIE FOSTER**  
Leadership in Education Award

Eddie Foster grew up in Lynchburg, Virginia, and earned a BA in business management from Lynchburg College. He worked for Babcock & Wilcox Naval Nuclear Fuels Division, where his primary responsibility was environmental compliance, and retired as part of a management team of a 700-acre site with 2,500 employees. While there, he started two companies that are still in operation today. He retired from the 23rd United States Naval Reserve Construction Battalion in 2004. In 2006, he joined Coastal Carolina CC as a director. He then joined Craven CC in 2010 and supervised safety programs until 2020, when he assumed responsibility for the Volt Center. Eddie is now dean of the Volt Center, working closely with industry partners and instructors to help students obtain a job. His willingness to understand the unique needs and perspectives of students, employers, and the community has been key to his success as a leader.

The **Community Fabric Awards** have **raised** over **\$560,000** since starting in **2011**



# GENERATING BUSINESS

## Golden LEAF Grant Helps Volt Center SBC Generator and Heavy Equipment Operations Initiatives

In a strategic move to bolster entrepreneurship, spur economic growth, and increase the number of skilled workers in Craven County, Craven CC is proud to announce the launch of its two latest enterprises: the Small Business Center (SBC) Generator and the Heavy Equipment Training Center. These undertakings were possible thanks to a \$495,115 boost from the Golden LEAF Community-Based Grants Initiative. Funds have been used to renovate two structures at the Volt Center, the College's workforce training facility near downtown New Bern.

The SBC Generator is an innovative program crafted to empower local entrepreneurs in successfully launching and scaling their businesses, setting a solid foundation for future community impact. It will offer a comprehensive suite of support services to reduce startup costs, facilitate access to funding, build market traction, and mitigate risks typically associated with startups. Selected entrepreneurs will benefit from an affordable workspace and a nurturing environment that fosters growth and development.

The 700-square-foot climate-controlled garage is adjacent to the College's SBC and will serve as a workspace for small business construction, light manufacturing, and business startups beginning in late August. The renovated space includes four bays, with one available for each small business in the program. It will equip tenants with the tools and insights they need to refine their business strategies, boosting their chances of success and fueling the local entrepreneurial scene.

"The SBC Generator will increase local economic development through small business startups and job creation," said SBC Director Dr. Jeff Wilke. "In addition, businesses that participate in programs such as these tend to stay in the same community after completing them."

The Golden LEAF grant has also facilitated the renovation of an 1,800-square-foot climate-controlled garage,

classroom, and lab space into the Heavy Equipment Training Center. This structure will be the site of the new Heavy Equipment Operations program.

The construction industry relies heavily on skilled professionals who use large machinery to construct our highways, buildings, and other structures. To address the growing demand for these qualified operators, this program will utilize state-of-the-art simulators to provide students with hands-on training in operating heavy construction equipment. This training prepares them for the challenges and responsibilities associated with real-world jobsites. By equipping students with the necessary skills and certifications, this program aims to increase the pool of qualified individuals to fill local job vacancies.

"Our partnerships in the local community will provide great employment opportunities right here in Craven County," said Volt Center Associate Dean Jeff Schulze. "There are well over 50,000 employment opportunities with median annual wages in the \$40,000 range. This is a living wage with great upward mobility and, most importantly, is a life-changing opportunity for new entrants in the workforce."

The Golden LEAF Foundation previously provided \$549,000 through the Community-Based Grants Initiative to renovate the Volt Center's largest facility, which houses an administrative office and skilled trades including plumbing, carpentry, construction, heating and air conditioning, small engine repair, and electrical work.

The completion of the SBC Generator and Heavy Machinery Training Center, made possible with the support of community partners like the Golden LEAF Foundation, marks another major milestone for the College's Volt Center. The campus is now fully equipped to train future generations of skilled trades workers and business owners. 📍





# CHARGING FORWARD

## NC State Offers New BS with Concentration in Electrical Engineering

**E**ngineers can always find room for improvement. That was certainly the case in 2004 when the College of Engineering at NC State University joined forces with Craven CC's Havelock campus to develop a local, transformative program that would cultivate career-ready engineers for Fleet Readiness Center East (FRCE). The partnership resulted in a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from NC State with a concentration in Mechanical Engineering Systems (MES) offered entirely on the Havelock campus.

The program had its first graduates in 2012 and achieved accreditation from the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) in 2014. Since then, the Havelock engineering program has produced 94 graduates, with 90 percent of those students staying in Eastern North Carolina after graduation. The program has developed a successful track record over the past decade, but Dr. Bill Fortney, NC State regional director of engineering since the program's inception, still saw room for improvement.

"Local businesses have a hard time attracting engineering talent, and finding electrical engineers is extremely difficult," said Fortney. "Several companies have approached us about how critical this is to their mission and how helpful it would be to have the same local option with electrical engineering that we have with mechanical engineering."

This need officially became a reality during the fall 2024 semester, when the NC State engineering program in Havelock expanded its ABET-accredited Bachelor of Science in Engineering degree to offer a concentration in Electrical Engineering Systems (EES) in addition to the existing MES concentration.

"Electrical engineers are even harder to get, and it's very competitive with urban areas," added Fortney. "Like our MES, the EES attracts local people who love Eastern North Carolina. It also opens new opportunities for a whole new group of students and serves local businesses in a new way."

**94** Number of program graduates since 2012

The EES program kicked off in August with four students enrolled. While this number may seem small for the first year, it's a start that's quite familiar to Fortney.

"In the MES, our first graduating class was four," he said. "We will have 15 graduating from the program this year. Our goal is to have 15 for the MES and 15 for the EES each fall."

The EES concentration provides a thorough study of electrical engineering fundamentals, including electrical/electronic devices and circuits, computer hardware and software, electromagnetics, electrical power systems, control systems, communications and signal processing, and the design and analysis of digital/analog electronic systems. The MES concentration delivers a robust education in mechanical engineering principles, covering topics such as structural mechanics, materials, fluid mechanics, dynamics, vibrations, controls, thermal sciences, mechanical design, and thermal design.

Both concentrations within the Havelock engineering program integrate formal systems engineering training, equipping students with the skills to navigate and resolve the complex issues inherent in integrated systems. This training, combined with specialized knowledge in either mechanical or electrical engineering, prepares graduates to tackle both technical and non-technical challenges in today's dynamic engineering landscape.

#### EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND INDUSTRY CONNECTIONS

A cornerstone of the Havelock engineering program is its strong emphasis on experiential learning. Students engage in hands-on design projects each semester and interact with professional engineers within the classroom setting. The program's proximity to FRCE aboard Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point provides unparalleled opportunities. As North Carolina's largest industrial employer east of Interstate 95, FRCE enhances the program through a symbiotic relationship, allowing students to benefit from the expertise of over 1,000 civilian engineers.

Students enrolled in the Havelock program often secure part-time, year-round internships at FRCE and other local employers. These positions not only provide invaluable work experience, but they also frequently offer tuition assistance. By bringing their professional development into the classroom, students enrich the educational experience for themselves and their peers.

#### STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITIES AND FACULTY

What sets this program apart is its uniqueness in the educational landscape—Craven CC is the only institution where students can earn a four-year engineering degree from NC State without leaving the campus. It is also the only community college in the region with in-person NC State faculty on site.

**90%**  
of program  
graduates  
have stayed in  
Eastern NC



**Dr. Bill Fortney speaks to the class of 2024. Fortney is the program's founding engineer and will retire in July 2025.**

Havelock's NC State engineering program is housed in Craven's state-of-the-art STEM Center, a 16,000-square-foot facility that opened in 2020. Havelock classrooms are equipped for interactive, synchronous learning. This allows students to attend the same live mechanical and electrical engineering course lectures as their counterparts in classrooms, taught by NC State faculty in Raleigh. On-site faculty in Havelock specialize in systems engineering, design, and laboratory courses, ensuring students receive a comprehensive and immersive educational experience. With small class sizes and a close-knit community of learners, students benefit from direct interaction with local faculty and staff. This approach offers an intimate learning environment, with personalized support from faculty.

The program also provides numerous enrichment opportunities, such as design competitions, community outreach projects, local plant tours, technical seminars, and access to professional organizations such as the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

The Havelock engineering senior class of 15 students will graduate in May, pushing the total number of graduates since the program's inception to over 100. This milestone also comes as Fortney, the program's founding engineer, gears up for his retirement in July 2025.

"None of us anticipated how significantly this partnership would shape our workforce and educational opportunities in Eastern North Carolina," said Fortney. "With its strong foundation and unwavering dedication to quality education, the Havelock engineering program is set to inspire the next generation of engineers and drive innovation for years to come." 🇺🇸





# EMBARKING ON A HEALING JOURNEY



## New Massage Therapy Program Teaches 'Knead-to-Know' Skills

**I**n a world where stress and tension are constant companions, the demand for massage therapists continues to rise. Recognizing this need, Craven administrators took matters into their own hands to roll out a new program. Creating a program from scratch is not easy, but thanks to market demand and input from skilled professionals to work out the kinks, the College introduced Massage Therapy to its offerings in April.

“Massage therapy is an increasingly sought-after career that doubles as a health and personal care service,” said Workforce Development Coordinator Tangye Middleton. “Students get in-depth instruction from experienced professionals, setting them up for certification in a lucrative field.”

The program starts by providing a solid foundation in the fundamentals of massage. Students gain hands-on experience in Swedish massage techniques, learning

the art of touch through practical training. This key component is complemented by a strong theoretical foundation in anatomy, physiology, and kinesiology, which provides a deep understanding of the human body and how massage therapy can influence it.

Student Rasheem Gatlin said the program has taught him so much about the human body that he didn’t previously know, and he has enjoyed being in such a unique field.

“I was looking for something I could do that not many people were doing around here,” he said.

As the program progresses, students explore advanced therapeutic techniques, expanding their knowledge base and treatment options. Additionally, the curriculum delves into kinesiology at a more advanced level and introduces pathology, allowing students to better understand various conditions, effectively evaluate clients, and create personalized treatment plans.

"I liked the appeal of creating my own schedule," said student Paige Winter, who plans to join her mom's massage therapy business after completion. "It's just really chill to do or have done. There's no real stress about getting it wrong or anything like that."

Somatic psychology is another important area of study, shedding light on the mind-body connection and its role in massage therapy. Additionally, to ensure students are prepared for the workforce, business management skills are also covered in the program.

"I want to start my own business and be able to make my own schedule," said student Brittany Melkonian. "It's something that doesn't have to be a nine-to-five."

A highlight of the program is the clinical component, where students gain invaluable real-world experience by working directly with clients. This practical experience allows them to refine their techniques, build confidence, and gain a deeper understanding of massage therapy in a professional setting.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect for aspiring massage therapists (and community members) is the opportunity to put their skills to the test in a public setting. This fall, select services will be offered to the public, providing students with opportunities to showcase what they have learned.

**"I want to start my own business and be able to make my own schedule. It's something that doesn't have to be a 9-to-5."**

**— Brittany Melkonian**  
*Massage Therapy Student*

Students who complete the program are eligible to take the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx). After passing the MBLEx, they can then apply for licensure with the North Carolina Board of Massage & Bodywork Therapy and begin their professional career as a Licensed Massage & Bodywork Therapist (LMBT).

"I'm a nurse looking to add more to my career and toolbox," said student Victoria Thall. "I did esthetics and more people wanted a massage, and then this program came along."

She values the hands-on learning environment the class provides, where students exchange techniques and practice on each other. Thall hopes to establish her own massage therapy business locally. ►



**28%** of massage therapists work in their home

The Massage Therapy program is led by Tracy Lee (LMBT), an approved provider through the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork. Lee owns Kneaded Yoga Massage off Glenburnie Road, where she offers therapeutic massage services designed to help those needing increased mobility, flexibility, and rehabilitation from injury or trauma, as well as those who just need some personal pampering. She also offers continuing education classes to colleagues.

“I went to work in the massage therapy profession after a 15-year career in emergency services,” she said. “I’ve always had a passion for helping people, which made my transition to massage therapy an easy choice.”

After spending 10 years working for franchises, the COVID-19 pandemic was the catalyst that helped Lee decide to go into private practice. During that time, she also noticed that many massage therapists closed their practices or went into different professions, while schools offering massage therapy programs closed their doors.

This created an increased demand for massage therapists coupled with a shortage of available training and qualified

professionals, which Craven CC is changing for Craven County and surrounding areas.

Student Alexis Harris explained that for her, massage therapy will be a stable career that’s flexible and allows her to spend more time with her child. She plans to work on Marines and student athletes at a sports massage therapy clinic in Jacksonville.

“The best part for me is that Tracy has a lot of experience, and there’s a lot of hands-on work and a lot of information, especially in the field I want to go into,” she explained.

In addition to providing restorative massages, massage therapists work with different healthcare practitioners, including chiropractors, physical therapists, and occupational therapists. This creates a holistic approach to patient care to achieve optimal treatment results.

“Training on the fundamentals of massage will make you a valuable part of a healthcare team,” added Lee. “Your training could lead to practicing massage while traveling the world on a cruise ship, or working directly with sports teams.”

**According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the field of massage therapy has seen above-average growth in recent years and is expected to jump 18% through 2032. The median annual wage as of May 2023 was \$55,310.**

### From the American Massage Therapy Association’s 2024 Massage Profession Research Report:

- 43% of all massage consumers got their last massage for health and wellness reasons as part of a treatment plan from a doctor or medical provider
- 15% list pampering as their primary reason for their last massage
- 51% got a massage last year for relaxation or stress reduction
- 39% of those making \$100,000 or more got a massage last year
- 17% of those making \$50,000 or less got a massage



# EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE

Excellence Awards recognize the exceptional work of employees who go above and beyond their day-to-day duties at work and in the community

“I am helping prepare the next generation of nurses who will take care of our community. I have encountered former students caring for loved ones, and I can confidently say that we did all we could do to prepare students for a successful career.

**KELSIE McBRIDE**  
FACULTY EXCELLENCE



Kelsie dreamed of becoming a nurse or teacher ever since she was a little girl. After taking anatomy in high school, her passion for nursing was confirmed. She decided to go into the field to help patients learn about their conditions and empower them to have the best possible outcomes. Kelsie joined Craven CC as a nursing adjunct clinical instructor in fall 2015, then became a full-time faculty member in August 2017. Working here has enabled her to grow both personally and professionally while also allowing her to achieve her lifelong career goals. She enjoys guiding her students through each step, watching them as they grow and learn, and working alongside them to encourage and care for patients.

“My passion lies in crafting compelling narratives that connect individuals with opportunities that can truly change their lives. Highlighting the transformative power of education through storytelling, design, and digital tools is what motivates me.

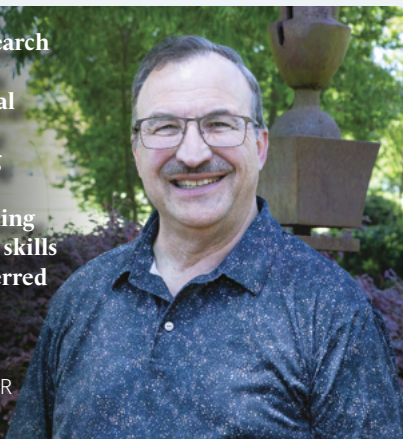
**HOLLY DESROSIER**  
STAFF EXCELLENCE



Fueled by a lifelong love of writing and all things creative, Holly honed her craft throughout high school and college to find her niche in marketing and communications. Her Craven career began in the President’s Office in 2016, where she quickly went from Administrative Assistant to Administrative Specialist, then to Communications Specialist in 2020, and is now Marketing & Communications Coordinator. Despite taking her work seriously, Holly enjoys sprinkling in puns and lightheartedness to make the workplace fun. She thrives on connecting the College and the community, showcasing opportunities that can light a path to brighter futures. She doesn’t see her role as just a job—it’s a chance to make a real difference.

“My career as a research biochemist brings real-world chemical experiences to the students. Engaging students with personalized learning and teamwork are skills that can be transferred to any profession.

**MARTIN PAGNOZZI**  
ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR  
EXCELLENCE



New York City native Marty credits his love of science and chemistry to exceptional academic experiences from high school through graduate school. He was a research biochemist for Pfizer and made significant contributions to the scientific community, then taught chemistry at the high school and community college levels in Connecticut before moving to New Bern. Marty has been an adjunct chemistry instructor at Craven CC’s Havelock campus since September 2020, where he has helped engineering, Early College, and other degree-seeking students appreciate the world of chemistry. He prioritizes personalized learning and enjoys seeing his students’ interests piqued from lab experiments.

# ESTABLISHING DEEP ROOTS FOR STRONG FUTURES

## American Legion Post 539 Gives Back to Veteran Students

The Foundation received \$2,000 from the American Legion Post 539 to be distributed to students who are veterans and/or spouses of veterans.



*The American Legion Post 539 contributed \$2,000 to student scholarships for veterans or spouses of veterans.*

## New Bern Woman's Club Donates to Volt Center Student Scholarships

In April, the New Bern Woman's Club (NBWC) donated \$2,700 for Volt Center students in need of Toolbelt Trust scholarships, textbooks, and Student Emergency Funds. The NBWC has supported Craven students since 2005.



*The New Bern Woman's Club donates \$2,000 to scholarships for students in programs at the Volt Center.*

## Neuse River Bridge Run Benefits College and Community

The Craven CC Foundation received a generous \$14,300 donation from the Neuse River Bridge Run (NRBR) in June. The funds were part of \$86,000 raised by the NRBR through their 2024 events in May. Funds were distributed among five other nonprofit organizations, including Duffyfield Phoenix Project, The Filling Station, Mediation Center of Eastern North Carolina, RCS, and Twin Rivers YMCA.

Since 2005, the NRBR has hosted a series of races for area runners and walkers of all ages. The Craven CC Foundation has been a sponsor and organizer of the events since 2006. This is just one example of the great outreach partnerships the College maintains in the community.

Throughout the years, different groups within the College have taken an active role in volunteering for the NRBR, including the Student Nursing Association, Hurst Student Ambassadors, and students in the Phi Theta Kappa organization. In addition, the College's Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) students volunteer to organize and lead the SuperKids Fun Run event.



*Students in Craven's Basic Law Enforcement Training program oversee the Neuse River Bridge Run's SuperKids Fun Run event. Photo courtesy of Jeremy LeRay, New Bern Web Design.*



The Craven CC Foundation and its donors helped a record-breaking number of over 2,000 students realize their educational dreams over the past academic year. Your donations are having a real impact, allowing our community to grow stronger with each graduating student. That tradition continues this year with a new campaign celebrating the College's upcoming 60th anniversary, entitled "Deep Roots, Strong Futures." Find out more at [CravenCC.edu/Foundation](http://CravenCC.edu/Foundation), call 252-638-7351, or scan the QR code with your smartphone's camera.



### Young Professionals of Craven County Support Volt Center Students

The Craven CC Foundation was presented with a \$2,500 donation from the Young Professionals (YP) of Craven County on Jan. 4. This donation went toward the New Bern Area Chamber of Commerce's Young Professionals Group Scholarship Endowment, bringing the total to \$20,000. This endowment covers tuition assistance for students between 18 and 40 years of age in any workforce development program at the Volt Center. Craven CC has over 40 noncredit courses and programs that count toward continuing education units or certification credentials in occupational training. These programs range from construction trades and hospitality occupations to diesel engine repair and more.

YP of Craven County is a chapter of the New Bern Area Chamber of Commerce for members between ages 21 and 45. Their mission is to bring professionals together to grow as individuals and as a community through volunteerism and fundraising. YP is passionate about the Volt Center, with several board members actively involved in its development as either program coordinators or instructors.



**Pictured left to right: Young Professionals of Craven County members Brandon Joyner, Bryan Wayne, and Sally Deschamps Stroud; Craven CC President Dr. Ray Staats; Craven CC VP for Development Dr. Gery Boucher; and YP member Victoria Hardy McGowen.**

### International Paper Donates Period Products to Stock the Panther Pantry

In honor of Women's History Month in May, International Paper's New Bern Mill held a drive for the Craven CC Panther Pantry. Over 60 packs of menstrual products and several packages of diapers were added to the Pantry's shelves to help students in need.

The Panther Pantry was originally established by Craven CC students in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Florence. Students and staff observed a continued need among the student population, and the Panther Pantry has been an important campus resource since then.



**International Paper's New Bern Mill donates packs of menstrual products and diapers to Craven CC's Panther Pantry in May.**

### Berne Lodge #724 Supports Engineering and Machining Students

On Dec. 20, Berne Lodge #724 presented the Foundation with a \$2,000 donation. The funds are set aside for students in programs including NC State Engineering, Computer-Integrated Machining, and Computer-Aided Drafting.

# foundation support

FUNDING STUDENT SUCCESS

## Gene Haas Foundation Awards Machining Students

The College's Computer-Integrated Machining (CIM) program received a \$10,000 grant from the Gene Haas Foundation in April. Nine students were presented with their own toolboxes, allowing them to leave the CIM program with all the tools and skills they need to excel in the workforce. Additional funds can be used for tuition, books, and other tools that may be needed in the program, as well as student competition teams.

"We are extremely honored to receive this grant for our manufacturing programs," said Craven CC Computer-Integrated Machining instructor Alex Block. "Our students are being prepared to help fill the skills gap in our country. These funds will be used to ensure our students enter the workforce with the tools they need to succeed."



**Nine students in the Computer-Integrated Machining program receive free toolboxes from the Gene Haas Foundation.**



**The Gene Haas Foundation presents \$10,000 in scholarships for students in the Computer-Integrated Machining program.**

## Tools from First Methodist Church

In December, First Methodist Church of Havelock donated a trailer full of tools and construction equipment to Craven CC for students to use in trades classes offered at the Volt Center. These tools, which were originally purchased to perform ministry work following Hurricane Florence, include hand tools, ladders, measuring tapes, tool bags and boxes, saws, wheelbarrows, and more.



**First Methodist Church of Havelock donates a trailer full of tools and construction equipment to Craven CC's Volt Center.**

## Gregory Poole Supports Diesel Technology Program

On May 3, Craven CC received a \$2,000 scholarship donation from Gregory Poole Equipment Company of Raleigh. The funds will be used to support students in the College's Diesel Technology program.



**Gregory Poole Equipment Company donates \$2,000 to support students in the Diesel Technology program at the Volt Center.**

## Havelock Student Receives Full-Tuition NC State Engineering Scholarship

On Dec. 18, the inaugural Heath Scholarship was awarded to its first recipient: first-year engineering student Maggie Galloway. Funds will cover tuition, fees, books, and required course materials for the first two years at Craven CC and the final two years at NC State University on Craven's Havelock campus.

"Craven Community College is dedicated to providing accessible and high-quality education to empower individuals and enrich communities," said Dr. Bill Fortney, Eastern NC Regional Director of Engineering. "With a commitment to innovation and excellence, Craven offers a range of academic programs and partnerships, including the unique engineering program in collaboration with NC State University."

The Dorothy G. Heath & Walter D. Heath, III Scholarship was recently established by the children of Walter D. Heath, Jr. and Dorothy G. Heath to honor their parents'

legacy and passion for engineering. It also serves as a testament to their commitment to education and the field of engineering.

It is the first of its kind for the Craven CC Foundation and will provide aspiring engineers with the financial support needed to pursue their education and contribute to the field. The scholarship will be awarded to a deserving engineering student at the start of each semester and will cover the cost of tuition, books, and fees from both Craven CC and NC State for the entirety of the degree program.

"We are incredibly grateful to the family of Walter and Dorothy Heath for establishing this extraordinary scholarship," said Charles Wethington, Craven CC executive director of Institutional Advancement. "Their commitment to education and engineering will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact on the recipients of this scholarship and the field as a whole."



*Craven CC engineering student Maggie Galloway is presented with a full-tuition scholarship for the Craven CC-NC State Engineering program on Dec. 19. This was made possible by the new Walter D. Heath, Jr. & Dorothy G. Heath Scholarship.*

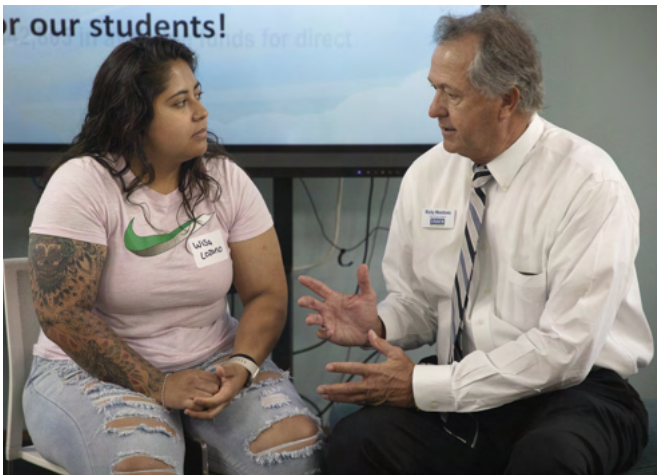
## Students Connect with Donors

Craven CC scholarship recipients had the chance to thank their benefactors in person at the Foundation's annual donor-student luncheon on Sept. 12, 2023. The event allowed students to share how scholarships have empowered them to chase their academic dreams, while donors were able to see the impact of their generosity.

The Foundation also received an \$18,000 donation from State Employees' Credit Union to support the Bridge to Career Program, which aims to help unemployed and underemployed adults develop marketable job skills.



**Karen Segal, Craven CC Foundation board member, and Jon Segal, Foundation past president, speak with scholarship recipient and Hurst Student Ambassador Rhianna Day.**



**Dean of Career & Technical Programs Ricky Meadows speaks with scholarship recipient Wisa Lozano.**



**The Craven CC Foundation receives an \$18,000 donation from State Employees' Credit Union to support unemployed and underemployed students.**

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# In Memoriam

## Matt Salerno (1972-2024)

Matthew Collins Salerno, affectionately known as "Matt" by his friends and family, passed away on Feb. 22, 2024. Born in Allentown, Pennsylvania and raised in Wilton, Connecticut, Matt's journey at Craven began as a student in the networking program and branched out to part-time employment with the College as a Computer Lab Assistant and Distance Education Technician. In 2003, Matt became employed full-time as a Computer Support Specialist and earned a certificate in Information Systems-Network Specialist and an Associate of Applied Science in Networking Technology in 2004.



Matt's career was marked by a dedication to helping others, expert project management, and leading IT efforts during the College's annual graduation ceremony. Over the years, Matt advanced through several positions, ultimately serving as the Director of Information Technology. Matt found love at the College, marrying Denise Salerno, Craven CC's Executive Director of Human Resources, in 2020. Together, they built a life full of love, laughter, and numerous adventures. Matt's warmth and easy-going nature will be deeply missed, but the memories he created will provide comfort to all who knew him.

## William Taylor (1947-2024)

William "Bill" Wayne Taylor, a dedicated Craven CC Trustee since August 2014, passed away on July 15, 2024. Bill faithfully served the College, holding the position of Vice Chair of the trustees during 2016 to 2017 and then Chair from 2017 to 2019. His 49-year career with Trader Construction was instrumental during the construction of the STEM Center on the Havelock campus and the opening of the Volt Center in New Bern. He also provided steadfast leadership as Craven navigated the challenges of Hurricane Florence and its aftermath.



A native of Bear Grass, Bill proudly served in the United States Marine Corps and was a Vietnam veteran. He found his greatest joy in spending time with his grandchildren.

## Chauncey Stevenson (1970-2024)

Chauncey Vernon Stevenson, who used his talents as a faculty member to inspire Craven students with music and the performing arts for more than 13 years, passed away on July 6, 2024. Originally from Baltimore, Maryland, Chauncey moved to New Bern at age seven. After graduating from New Bern High School, Chauncey's academic journey continued at Shaw University, the oldest HBCU in the country, where he expanded the gospel choir and performed at local churches.



Chauncey returned to New Bern and found a new home at Craven, where he first served as an adjunct faculty member in 2011. He went on to become a full-time music faculty member in 2014 and expanded his role in recent years to serve as coordinator for the College's fine arts programs. This role also allowed him to lead Encore!, the College's singing ambassador group, with performances held throughout the year for the College and surrounding community. Chauncey had a true passion for music, devotion to his students, and a quiet humor that will be greatly missed in Orringer Hall.

## Vince Castellana Memorial Garden

The Havelock campus hosted a dedication service on Oct. 30, 2023, for the Vincent Castellana Memorial Garden. The garden was developed as part of an Eagle Scout project by Aidan Hacker, who designed the landscape with flowers and Star Wars themes that were inspired by Havelock Chair Vince Castellana, who passed away suddenly on June 25, 2019.



# WE APPRECIATE OUR DONORS!

*The Craven Community College Foundation continues to help thousands of students reach educational goals and new career opportunities. We appreciate your generosity and investment in each student's future as we all work together to build a stronger community.*

\*The following donor list includes all cash and in-kind gifts received in the 2023-2024 fiscal year (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024).

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# A LOVE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

## How the Community Enrichment Program is Becoming the New Social Hour

Visitors to a local Mexican restaurant may have recently seen a group of Community Enrichment Program (CEP) students seated around a table, laughing, munching on chips and salsa, and speaking in Spanish. Representing a diverse population in backgrounds and ranging in ages from 30-67, the students celebrated the final day of a Conversational Spanish class by going out to dinner together to put their newfound skills to the test.

This is one of the most recent examples of a CEP class at Craven CC that evolved into a fun, social experience for the students.

“Social distancing kept us apart during the COVID pandemic,” said CEP Coordinator Dr. Suzanne Madison. “Our CEP program was put on hold because there was not really a way for us to host these classes, and then when the

pandemic ended, it took us some time to get the processes back up and running. But now that we are offering these classes, we are really seeing that the community is hungry for social interactions. It feels like a pendulum swing from social distancing to social hour.”

The CEP officially offered its first post-COVID classes in January 2023. Previously known as the Adult Enrichment Program, the revamped CEP caters to individuals of all ages and interests, providing an opportunity for everyone to discover the joy of picking up a new hobby or learning a new skill.

CEP students have had the chance to create lasting memories through various activities, such as photography, crafting original works of art, boat safety training, learning American Sign Language, engaging in hands-on cooking classes, mastering self-defense techniques, and much more.



**Participants in the Community Enrichment Program's Spanish course spend their final class ordering and eating at a Spanish restaurant.**



**All of the CEP's cooking classes are held in the Volt Center kitchen, allowing access to professional-grade equipment and accessories.**

The revitalized program has garnered enthusiastic participation from the community, with members eagerly enrolling in both new courses and returning favorites. The introductory year of 2023 welcomed 266 students and 47 new classes, which was boosted in part by the introduction of Craven's new Volt Center kitchen. Access to this facility and growing popularity has resulted in a dramatic increase in cooking and cuisine classes, growing from 11 in 2023 to 23 in 2024.

### **A PROGRAM FOR EVERYONE**

The CEP offers a wide array of classes based on instructor availability and community interest. Classes typically fall into four categories, including: Arts & Crafts, Kitchen & Cuisine, Language, and Recreation & Wellness.

"A lot of our success comes from trial and error," said Madison. "Sometimes a class is just popular enough to be held one time, while other classes are held several times throughout the year. Or, we have students ask for a secondary level to the class, like we've seen with our Spanish and American Sign Language offerings."

Hands-on cooking classes have proven to be a new favorite among CEP students who enjoy learning to prepare delicious meals in a fun and social setting. These classes are a hit among families, couples, and individuals alike, creating a dynamic and interactive environment where everyone can enjoy cooking together. Upcoming classes include All the Way Greek (Sept. 27), Intro to Sourdough (Oct. 7 & 18), Appetizer Extravaganza (Nov. 14 & 22), and Soup and Stuffed Bread (Dec. 20).

Art classes have also seen robust enrollment, with courses covering everything from watercolor painting to pencil drawing. These classes offer a creative outlet for participants and provide an opportunity for self-expression. Many attendees have discovered hidden talents and newfound passions through these artistic endeavors. Upcoming art classes include Basic Photography (Sept. 18-23), Painting with Acrylics (Oct. 1-24), and Watercolor Painting (Oct. 4-25).

### **COMMUNITY IMPACT**

The CEP's success can be attributed to its commitment to inclusivity and diversity. By offering classes that appeal to a wide audience, the program ensures there is something for everyone. Whether someone is a retiree looking to explore new hobbies, a working professional seeking to acquire additional skills, or a young adult eager to try something different, the CEP has a class that suits their needs.

"The goal of the Community Enrichment Program is to unite community members through the joy of learning new and exciting skills," added Madison. "We've had students as young as 27 and as mature as 92. Whether you're looking to perfect a specific skill or explore something entirely new, I encourage people to check out our offerings."

One of the standout features of the CEP is its responsiveness to community interests. Madison actively solicits feedback from participants, using their suggestions to shape the program's offerings. This approach not only keeps the curriculum fresh and relevant, but also fosters a sense of ownership and engagement among community members.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

Relaunching the CEP has been a resounding success, providing a wealth of opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and community building. With its diverse range of classes, responsive approach to community feedback, and commitment to inclusivity, the CEP is poised to continue enriching the lives of community members for years to come.

As it continues to grow, Madison is committed to expanding the program's reach and impact. She plans to introduce more classes that reflect the evolving interests and needs of the community. Whether someone is looking to learn something new, meet like-minded individuals, or simply have fun, the CEP offers something for everyone.

So, why not take the plunge and join a class today? Discover the joy of lifelong learning and become a part of the vibrant community that makes the CEP so special. 🌟

**We want to hear from you! Suggest a new class topic or offer to teach a class at [Craven CC.edu/CEP](https://www.cravencc.edu/cep)**

# SERVING THE UNDERSERVED



**TRANSITIONS ACADEMY TREATS STUDENTS TO THE POWER OF COMMUNITY SERVICE**

**B**eing a furry friend in a shelter with no place to call home is doggone “ruff.” One dedicated group of Craven CC students made it their mission to spread some holiday cheer to local shelter dogs last December.

Students in the College’s Transitions Academy embarked on the unique community service project of baking dog biscuits. The treats, which were prepared in the Volt Center kitchen, were donated to representatives of the Craven Pamlico Animal Services Center and Craven County Sheriff’s Department Animal Protective Services.

The Transitions Academy is offered under the College’s College & Career Readiness (CCR) department. This free, two-year program empowers adults with mild intellectual disabilities to advance their education and prepare for the workforce, with a focus on strengthening core abilities in math, reading, writing, technology, and soft skills. It also goes beyond the classroom, providing students with real-world experiences to explore potential careers and allowing them to gain valuable knowledge and confidence to aid them in future endeavors. The program offers a variety of modules, including horticulture, government, healthcare, childcare, carpentry, and food preparation and safety.

“This was a great learning experience that allowed students to gain important life skills while also giving back to the community,” said CCR Director Sandy Bayliss-Carr. “Our goal is to provide a combination of academic and real-world education to optimize their chance of becoming productive, successful employees and community members. The students were able to not only train in food preparation and safety, but also have the priceless experience of selflessly completing a task to benefit others.”

The Transitions Academy has a long-standing tradition of giving back to the community through service projects. This year’s project was a fun way to combine learning with action. Led by instructor Susan Mills, the 14 students picked out a recipe, then put their food preparation and safety skills to the test by baking healthy dog treats. They got hands-on experience with measuring, mixing, and shaping the dough using bone-shaped cookie cutters. After baking, they bagged each treat, transforming their creations into paw-some gifts for local animals. This project not only honed their practical skills but also offered a taste of entrepreneurship through the process.

“Community service projects are part of the curriculum for the students in the Transitions Academy,” said Bayliss-Carr. “We have participated

in Operation Christmas Child – Samaritan’s Purse in the past, as well as collecting canned goods for those in need during the holidays. The students have also planted bulbs and other flowers to beautify the campus as part of a service learning experience.”

The dog biscuit community service project made for a tail-waggingly fun experience and was a hit with everyone involved. The Transitions Academy students—and undoubtedly the resident shelter dogs—look forward to continued baking projects and donations to area shelters.

“We had a great time at the Volt Center, and I am sure the dogs will be very happy when they get their treats,” said Transitions Academy student Eliza Paisley Ward. “Ms. Mills taught us many ways to be prepared safely in the kitchen while baking the treats, and we enjoyed the experience and can’t wait to do it again.” 🐾



**Transitions Academy students proudly present local shelter representatives with dog biscuits they made as part of a community service project.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

- 🐾 Craven’s CCR Basic Skills program was ranked fifth in the state for Measurable Skill Gain Rate during the 2022-2023 academic school year.
- 🐾 In addition to the Transitions Academy, the CCR department has a variety of programs that specialize in improving adult literacy skills, earning a high school equivalency (GED®/HiSET®), completing a high school diploma, obtaining digital literacy skills, and learning English as a Second Language.
- 🐾 CCR began holding classes at the Craven County Jail in Fall 2022. Four students have earned high school equivalencies so far.
- 🐾 CCR holds several classes for BSH Home Appliances and other businesses on and offsite: Workplace Literacy, English as a Second Language, Digital Literacy, and Microsoft Office.

# panther partnerships

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

## 'Bronco Benefit' to Help Craven CC Students Transfer to Fayetteville State

Craven CC graduates who complete specified two-year degree programs can now seamlessly transfer to Fayetteville State University (FSU) thanks to a new partnership. Administrators from both institutions convened at FSU on May 29 to sign the agreement, called the Bronco Benefit. Craven CC is one of 15 North Carolina community colleges who have joined this initiative. FSU selected partner community colleges based on their strategic plans and transfer rates.

"Our partnership with Fayetteville State's Bronco Benefit program is exciting for Craven CC graduates," said Craven

CC Vice President for Instruction Dr. Kathleen Gallman. "It creates a smooth path for our students to continue their education and earn a bachelor's degree."

Since FSU course options closely align with Craven's associate degree programs, this allows students to easily transfer credits and continue their education toward a four-year degree.

The Bronco Benefit initiative creates a convenient and local pathway that allows students to further their academic goals with two institutions that prioritize the value of lifelong learning.



Officials from Craven CC and Fayetteville State University sign a transfer agreement on May 29. Pictured left to right: Craven CC VP for Instruction Dr. Kathleen Gallman, Craven CC President Dr. Ray Staats, FSU Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Dr. Monica Terrell Leach, and FSU Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer Darrell Allison.

## First Citizens Grant Funds Training for Unemployed, Underemployed, Justice-Involved Students at Craven's Volt Center

The Craven 100 Alliance (C1A) received a \$10,000 grant from First Citizens Bank in December to create scholarships for the Volt Center at Craven CC. These will support workforce training and trade certifications for unemployed, underemployed, and justice-involved individuals in the community. In collaboration with C1A, Craven CC awarded scholarships to students taking trades classes between January and May. The funds were distributed to 40 students, each receiving \$250 in assistance.

The Volt Center worked with the NC Department of Social Services, Vocational Rehab, New Bern Housing Authority, Interfaith Refugee Ministry, Craven-Pamlico Re-Entry Program, and the NC Department of Juvenile Justice to identify and engage eligible individuals for the program. Corporate partners like C1A are instrumental in supporting career opportunities and equipment needs for students to complete the program.



Pictured left to right: Craven CC Volt Center Associate Dean Jeff Schulze, Craven 100 Alliance member Lee Hodge, First Citizens Bank Manager of Retail Banking Jeff Medlin, Craven CC VP for Development Dr. Gery Boucher, and Craven CC Executive Director of Institutional Advancement Charles Wethington.

## **New CarolinaEast EVS/Housekeeping Program Benefits Healthcare Field**

Craven CC joined forces with CarolinaEast Health System to launch a new Environmental Services (EVS)/Housekeeping training program at the College's Volt Center, which kicked off its first session last October.

EVS/housekeeping technicians play a vital role in healthcare settings. They are responsible for cleaning, disinfecting, and maintaining a clean and healthy environment for both patients and staff. Their jobs require meticulous attention to detail to ensure a safe and sterile space for patient care.

“We are excited about this partnership with Craven Community College because hiring and retention are an ongoing challenge for us,” said David Snook, Director of Environmental Services at CarolinaEast Medical Center. “We see this as a benefit to the hospital and participants, but most importantly our patients and the community we serve.”

To prepare students for the workforce, a classroom replicating an actual CarolinaEast Medical Center hospital room environment was crafted at the Volt Center. Participants get hands-on experience while wearing

scrubs and gloves, just like they would on the job. The training covers everything from proper attire and uniform guidelines to call-out procedures and effective time management. Students learn how to communicate and collaborate effectively within a team environment.

Additionally, the program explores industry-specific topics and equips participants with valuable soft skills essential for understanding hospital expectations and interacting professionally within the healthcare setting. All students who complete this course are guaranteed an interview with CarolinaEast Health System.

“This program can benefit students who are already working in the healthcare industry, as well as those seeking entry-level positions,” added Craven CC Workforce Development Coordinator Meghan Margarum. “The program can provide a way for existing housekeeping professionals to improve their skills and increase their chances of career advancement while also providing those entering the profession with the foundational knowledge and skills necessary to secure employment opportunities.”



**8**  
classes have  
run since the  
program began

**14**  
students hired  
by CarolinaEast

*Workforce Development Coordinator Meghan Margarum demonstrates sterile cleaning procedures taught in the CarolinaEast EVS/Housekeeping program. She spent three weeks doing onsite training, which she says has immensely enhanced the quality of the training and success of the program.*

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## Craven CC Students Bring Home Medals from SkillsUSA Competition

Nine Craven CC students demonstrated their abilities at the SkillsUSA National Skilled Trades Championships, held June 23-27 in Atlanta. Students David Starnes, Robert Duren, and Spencer Higgs took home a gold medal in Engineering Technology and Design, while BSH apprentices Storm Ducharme and Connor Bernhardt placed fifth and eighth places in Machining, respectively.

The 2024 SkillsUSA Championships showcased the skilled trades and had 6,540 competitors in 115 competitions. All students who competed in Atlanta were able to go at no cost thanks to the generosity of the Craven Community College Foundation and Carl Perkins Grant Funding.

To qualify for the national competition, students were required to place in the SkillsUSA State Conference, which was held in Greensboro in April. Twenty Craven CC students also competed and placed in the 2024 SkillsUSA North Carolina competition, including five first-place awards, three second-place awards, and six third-place awards.

In addition, nine high school students in the Career & College Promise program brought home two golds, three bronzes, and one fourth-place award.

SkillsUSA, a leading workforce development organization, empowers students across middle school, high school, and post-secondary institutions to become skilled professionals, capable leaders, and responsible citizens through scholarships, service projects, and competitions.



*Craven CC students David Starnes, Robert Duren, and Spencer Higgs celebrate on stage after receiving first place in Engineering and Technology Design at SkillsUSA.*



*Students Storm Ducharme and Connor Bernhardt pose at the 2024 SkillsUSA National Skilled Trades Championship.*



*Pictured left to right from top: Students Robert Duren, Zackery Dunn, Connor Bernhardt, Spencer Higgs, Storm Ducharme, David Starnes, Paul Quiram, Mary Caldwell, and Zachary Felts; advisors Alexander Block, Ricky Meadows, Matthew Berg, and Caleb Wetherington.*





## Student Overcomes Hardships to Become Ambassador and Work Study

Strength and perseverance define Rhianna Day. Despite years of hardship, she recently achieved a remarkable feat: earning her associate in arts degree with honors. After a challenging journey that started with becoming a mother at 15 and several years of substance abuse, she's now six years sober and dedicated to empowering others who face similar battles.

"I have a passion for working with the children and families of addicts and teaching them tools on how to cope with life when it gets challenging," said Day. "I believe that prevention is key to stopping this epidemic and with that there needs to be more education and exposure. Knowledge is most definitely power."

During her time at the College, she served as a work study for the Craven CC Foundation, Hurst Student Ambassador, and Public Relations Officer for Craven's Phi Theta Kappa chapter, Alpha Phi Nu. She also shared her story at events in front of peers, employees, and the community, finding that being open and vulnerable while celebrating her

accomplishments was both humbling and rewarding.

"Being a part of the Craven student body has blessed me in many ways, reminding me I am purpose driven and dedicated and have the ability to excel at anything," added Day. "My eyes have been opened to endless possibilities in continuing my academic career."

With a clear vision for the future, she's set to begin at the University of North Carolina Wilmington's School of Social Work this fall. Her plan is to pursue both a bachelor's and master's degree, equipping herself with the knowledge and skills to make a lasting impact. Her dream is to establish a nonprofit organization that provides substance abuse resources to underserved communities.

She's also passionate about advocating for reform within the prison system, and she hopes to work with re-entry programs to decrease recidivism rates while empowering offenders to successfully reintegrate into society and become workforce ready.



# student spotlight

HIGHLIGHTING SUCCESS

## Student Awarded with Prominent Scholarships to Attend NC State

Craven CC student Logan Tibbetts was awarded two prestigious scholarships in April to assist with his transfer to NC State University: the Goodnight Scholarship and the Coca-Cola Scholarship. This rare honor will allow him to complete a bachelor's degree in computer engineering with no college debt.

Tibbetts, a member of the College's Alpha Phi Nu chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society, was one of 50 students chosen from a pool of 1,200 applicants to receive the Goodnight Scholarship. It will provide up to \$23,000, renewable annually for four years, to cover expenses for tuition and fees, housing, and meals related to incoming NC State STEM students. The scholarship prioritizes service to others and empowers students to be transformative leaders.

Tibbetts was also named a 2024 Coca-Cola Academic Team Silver Scholar and was awarded a \$1,250 scholarship. His selection was based on scores earned in the All-USA Academic Team competition, which received more than 2,200 applications in 2024. This program is sponsored by the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation and is administered nationally by the PTK Honor Society.

On May 10, Tibbetts graduated from Early College EAST on Craven CC's Havelock campus, earning both his high school diploma and an associate degree in engineering. He was the first Craven CC student to be awarded both scholarships in the history of the College.

"I am extremely grateful for the people who have supported me during my academic journey," said Tibbetts. "My time in Scouts BSA, Phi Theta Kappa, Early College

EAST, and Craven Community College has provided various experiences and connections that have shaped me for future success. I hope to use this opportunity to focus more on giving back to my community and providing service to others."



**"I am extremely grateful for the people who have supported me during my academic journey. My time in Scouts BSA, Phi Theta Kappa, Early College EAST, and Craven Community College has provided various experiences and connections that have shaped me for future success. I hope to use this opportunity to focus more on giving back to my community and providing service to others."**

**— Logan Tibbetts**  
*Craven CC Graduate,  
Class of 2024*

## Student Graduates with Diploma, Degree, and Full Ride to MIT

Haley Hernandez, 17, received her high school diploma and associate in science degree from Craven CC during graduation on May 10. Even more impressively, she also received a full-ride scholarship to attend Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Hernandez was a student at Early College EAST (ECE), a high school program that allows students the opportunity to take classes on Craven CC's Havelock campus. Students who complete the coursework can earn both a high school diploma and associate degree in five years. She was also active in Alpha Phi Nu, as well as the Interact Club through ECE that partners with the Havelock Rotary Club.

Hernandez wrapped up her senior year with not only an acceptance letter from MIT, but also a full-ride scholarship to Harvard. After meeting with alumni through the MIT Introduction to Technology, Engineering, and Science program for motivated 7th-12th graders, she determined that computer science and coding was her passion.

Her experience moving around as a military child helped strengthen her ability to connect with new people and

build relationships, a skill that will support her during the upcoming fall semester at MIT.

"I think I'm most excited to meet the people," she said. "I'm excited to meet new people and make those bonds."



## Student Pilot's Future Takes Flight with \$200K Scholarship

There are clear skies on the horizon for Craven CC graduate Jake Alchin. Within a two-month period, he received an Aviation Management and Career Pilot Technology degree and a \$200,000 scholarship from the Naval Reserves Officer Training Corps (NROTC) to attend a college of his choice. Alchin plans to earn a degree in aerospace engineering.

The NROTC program sends candidates through officer training and pays for school costs so students can focus on their studies. After graduation, students are committed to a three-to-five-year service agreement and enter the U.S. Navy in a leadership position as a Commissioned Officer.

Chief Jonathan Schneider traveled from Navy Recruiting Station Raleigh to personally present Alchin with the check and shake his hand.

"The Navy is looking forward to having Jake," said Schneider. "He's one of the ones the Navy wanted because he's going to be an asset. He was one of 80 people selected over a few thousand applicants."

Since his dad worked in marine aviation maintenance for 26 years, Alchin grew up around aircraft, which fueled his career passion. He had the opportunity to take the yoke of a Cessna 172 at age 15 and has been flying ever since then.

Alchin has been accepted into the University of Arizona School of Engineering, Embry Riddle, and Texas A&M. He has also been hired as a flight instructor at D2 Flight Academy in New Bern and is traveling to San Diego to teach Navy personnel. After earning his degree, he aspires to join the ranks of Naval aviators, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather and continuing their legacy of service.



# student spotlight

HIGHLIGHTING SUCCESS

## Ukrainian Students Find a New Home, Thrive at Craven CC

International students Valentyna Yakymets and Daryna Slipenko recently closed a monumental chapter in what is destined to be an epic life story. Both Ukrainians graduated with associate in arts degrees in May, opening opportunities for them to transfer to a four-year university and complete a bachelor's degree in the United States.

Lifelong friends Yakymets and Slipenko, inseparable since high school in Kyiv, Ukraine, found their world shattered by war. Yakymets, the only one from her family eligible to flee due to wartime restrictions, was forced to leave the men behind. Slipenko's family, though fortunate to escape, are now scattered across three different countries.

A compassionate New Bern family, touched by Slipenko's situation, immediately offered to open their home to her. The fortuitous discovery of Craven CC's international student programs streamlined the process, allowing Slipenko to swiftly relocate to New Bern and begin classes. Yakymets was able to reunite with her friend two months

later, both finding support and a path forward in their new country.

"We were lucky and blessed to get through this process together," said Slipenko. "We've grown so much here: educationally, as a person, and with relationships around the campus, which will help us in the future."

Craven CC became a safe haven for the two friends over the course of their studies. Their academic odyssey reached its pinnacle as they proudly walked across the stage to accept their degrees. While their immediate plans are uncertain, one thing is guaranteed: Their futures are brighter thanks to a strong academic foundation and an unbreakable bond.

"Our whole life here has been connected to Craven," said Yakymets. "But it's our time to move forward, and changes are important. We're very grateful to Craven—it gave us our future lives."



*Ukrainians Valentyna Yakymets, left, and Daryna Slipenko graduate with their associate in arts degrees and a future full of potential.*

## Phi Theta Kappa recognizes Millard

In April, Craven CC Vice President for Administration Jim Millard was one of 22 college administrators recognized by the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society with Distinguished College Administrator Awards.

This national award recognizes college administrators who work directly with students to solve problems on campus and in their communities. They have taken an active interest in supporting high-achieving students and developing student leaders. Honorees were selected from among thousands of eligible college administrators.

Millard also received the PTK Carolinas Regional Distinguished College Administrator award during Craven CC's PTK induction ceremony in March.



## Marketing Wins 3 NCMPR Awards

Craven CC's marketing department received two Medallion Awards from the National Council for Marketing & Public Relations (NCMPR) in October 2023. NCMPR's Medallion Awards recognize outstanding achievement in design and communication among marketing and public relations professionals at community and technical colleges.

The College received a first-place award for a radio advertisement titled "Broken Record." The ad was for the Spring 2023 semester, and the script was written by Craig Ramey. It also went on to win a gold Paragon Award at NCMPR's national conference in Seattle in March.

Additionally, the College received a silver medal for the 2022 edition of Craven Magazine, designed by Holly Desrosier, edited by Ramey, and written by both.

## Emeritus Class of 2024

Craven CC's College Emeritus program recognizes retired faculty and staff who have made exceptional contributions toward fulfilling the College's mission and vision during a long, distinguished career as a Craven employee. There were three members of the 2024 class: Karen Nelson (faculty emeritus), Dr. Betty Hatcher (dean emeritus), and Rita Barrow (staff emeritus). Each was officially recognized during the 57th annual commencement ceremony.

**KAREN NELSON** retired from Craven CC in 2023, having served as a Developmental English faculty member for 38 years. She made an incredible difference in the lives of thousands of students, guiding them in learning the fundamentals of reading and writing, and enabling them to continue toward earning a college degree.



**DR. BETTY HATCHER** retired in May 2024 after serving as the Dean of Liberal Arts & University Transfer for over 12 years. She became Associate VP for Instruction in 2022 and enjoyed working with faculty and students and to make a lasting impact. She also served as Director of the Academic Skills Center, English faculty, department chair, and is a Craven alum.

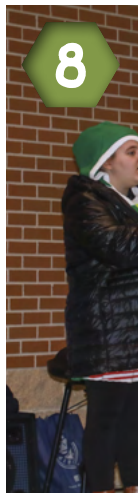


**RITA BARROW** retired in 2020, having served as a custodian for more than 33 years. Her long and faithful service to the College is a family tradition: She followed in the footsteps of her mother, Belle Barrow, who served for many years, and is succeeded by her cousin, Julia Barrow, who currently serves on the College's custodial team.



# CAMPUS & COMMUNITY

At Craven CC, we're all about building connections. Our tight-knit group of students and employees make lasting memories through community involvement, and campus events. Follow us on social media to see more!



- 1 Fifth graders learn about a variety of career options during the Careers on Wheels event.
- 2 Dr. Staats discovers the name of the College's mascot, Blaze, during a name-revealing event.
- 3 Blaze hangs out with students during PantherFest.
- 4 Students, veterans, and community members participate in the Field of Flags at Union Point.
- 5 College representatives set up a booth during New Bern's Juneteenth celebration.
- 6 An eighth grader learns about chest compressions during the Craven County Schools Career & Technical Education Expo.
- 7 Students test out aerodynamics during the engineering camp at the Havelock campus.
- 8 The College's Encore! singing group performs during the Havelock campus tree-lighting event.
- 9 Students give out baked goods during the College's Hispanic Heritage event in October.



# CONGRATS, GRADUATES!





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