

# VCU Shafer Court Connections

THE MAGAZINE FOR STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND FRIENDS OF VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

> Fall 2009



*Welcome*  
to the *family*

New VCU President  
Michael Rao, Ph.D.,  
joins the university  
community



# CIRCA

## Campus concerts: 2008

Grammy Award-winning artist Sheryl Crow plays to Virginia Commonwealth University students and Richmond community members at Monroe Park as part of the 2008 Rock the Vote tour with Jack Johnson and the Beastie Boys. Later that night, the performers urged a crowd of 5,300 at the Richmond Coliseum to get out and vote.







# Contents

## [FEATURES]

### 8 > **Welcome to the family**

Virginia Commonwealth University's fifth president, Michael Rao, Ph.D., joins the campus community.

### 12 > **Smart pick**

After a summer of recruiting, Shaka Smart prepares to take the floor as VCU's new men's basketball coach.

### 14 > **Lights, camera, action**

Peep This helps young African-American males gain perspective through documentary filmmaking.

### 16 > **Celebrate VCU**

A new alumni association agenda promotes university pride and service among graduates.

### 22 > **Helping hands**

Donors step in to save student scholarships in jeopardy of losing funding due to the faltering economy.

## [DEPARTMENTS]

### 2 > **Circa**

Campus concerts: 2008.

### 5 > **University news**

Noteworthy news and research at VCU.

### 18 > **Face to face**

Diane Reynolds talks about organizing a university-wide effort to fill the foodbank.

### 19 > **My college town**

Richmond's national reputation as a road-racing destination continues to grow.

### 20 > **The big picture**

Fall's vibrant foliage frames the streets of VCU's Monroe Park Campus.

### 26 > **Alumni connections**

The latest news from the alumni association.

### 31 > **Class notes**

Updates from alumni, faculty, staff and friends.

### 37 > **Then and now**

The social and service aspects that launched Greek life at VCU remain intact today.

### 38 > **Datebook**

Upcoming university and alumni events.

### 39 > **Circa**

Campus concerts: 1989.

## Association develops avenues for alumni service

It is an honor to introduce myself as the new president of your Virginia Commonwealth University Alumni Association. These are exciting times at your alma mater, as we welcome President Michael Rao and his family into the VCU community. Please read the article on Page 8 to learn more about him.

Based on the fall 2007 alumni survey results, as well as the results of the May 2008 Alumni Symposia, your association has established three primary strategic initiatives to undertake during the next two years, and I invite you to join and work with volunteers and staff to support one or more of the them.

We will focus on:

- Service to community and VCU
- University engagement and student-alumni programs
- Membership acquisition and retention

More detailed information is available for each on Page 16.

Alumni services are not limited to social programming, and we hope the new service and engagement priorities will provide a more natural means for bringing you and other VCU graduates into the black-and-gold fold. VCU alumni tell us they want to give back to the university and “pay it forward” to benefit future generations of students. They clearly see their alumni association as a catalyst for promoting service to the community and to the university.

We also want to involve our university partners, such as the Division of Community Engagement, to make sure we tackle service projects collaboratively. But it’s not just about giving back in the Richmond area; we want VCU alumni like you to lead these efforts regardless of where you live.

We want to find more ways to connect to students, to make sure they’re engaged in opportunities for service with our alumni. We also want to make sure we’re motivating students to become actively involved with the VCUEAA while they’re on campus so when they receive their diploma, one of the things they give to themselves is an active dues membership in their alumni association.

Alumni play a critical role in the continued success of the association’s goals and, in turn, the growth of the university as a leading institution of higher education. I invite you to connect, engage and serve as an active dues-paying member and volunteer leader.

Yours for VCU,

Donna Dalton (M.Ed. '00/E)  
President, VCU Alumni Association



## VCU Shafer Court Connections

Fall 2009 • Volume 15, Number 1  
[www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org)

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT,  
UNIVERSITY ALUMNI RELATIONS  
Gordon A. McDougall

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
VCU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
Diane Stout-Brown (B.S.W. '80/SW)

EDITORIAL  
Kristen Caldwell (B.S. '94/MC)

DESIGN  
Trina Lambert

PHOTOGRAPHY  
Linda George

PRODUCTION  
Jessica Foster

CONTRIBUTORS  
*Editorial:* Kelli Anderson, Claire Hairfield (B.A. '08/H&S), Jennifer Carmean (B.S. '98/H&S), Teri Dunnivant, Erin Egan, Polly Roberts, Melanie Irvin Solaimani (B.S. '96/MC), Kim Witt

*Design:* Pamela Arnold (B.F.A. '87/A), Nathan Hanger (B.S. '01/MC), Haley Hollenbach (B.F.A. '01/A), Katie McBride (B.F.A. '04/A), Matthew Phillips (M.F.A. '87/A), Shannon Williams

*Photography:* VCU Libraries—Special Collections and Archives, Kevin Casey, Allen Jones (B.F.A. '82/A; M.F.A. '92/A), Tom Kojcsich

Shafer Court Connections is published semiannually by the VCU Office of Alumni Relations and VCU Creative Services for Virginia Commonwealth University’s alumni, faculty, staff and friends. Opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily represent those of the university or magazine staff.

Send address changes to the Office of Alumni Relations, Virginia Commonwealth University, 924 W. Franklin St., P.O. Box 843044, Richmond, VA 23284-3044; telephone (804) 828-2586; [vcu-alum@vcu.edu](mailto:vcu-alum@vcu.edu) or [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org).

**Letters to the editor** should be sent to Shafer Court Connections, Virginia Commonwealth University, 827 W. Franklin St., P.O. Box 842041, Richmond, VA 23284-2041, or e-mail [shafercourt@vcu.edu](mailto:shafercourt@vcu.edu). Please include your name, address and a daytime phone number; anonymous letters will not be published. Letters may be edited for clarity or space.

Contributions of articles, photos and artwork are welcome, however, Shafer Court Connections accepts no responsibility for unsolicited items.

© 2009, Virginia Commonwealth University.  
An equal opportunity, affirmative action university. 090505-06



### On the cover

VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D., Mrs. Monica Rao and their sons, Miguel, 9, and Aiden, 1, at the “Truth and Beauty” sculpture located on the Monroe Park Campus.



### Recycled

Supporting responsible use  
of forest resources

[www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org) Cert no. SGS-COC-003987  
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council



# University news

Virginia Commonwealth University  
news and research. For the  
latest updates, visit VCU online  
at [www.news.vcu.edu](http://www.news.vcu.edu).

## VCU TV/HD captures two regional Emmys

VCU TV/HD won two regional awards for excellence at the 51st Emmy Awards held June 6 in Washington, D.C. The ceremony was sponsored by the National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

VCU TV/HD received an Emmy in the "Documentary - Cultural" category for "VCU Qatar." **Lisa Figueroa** (B.S. '07/MC) served as senior producer and **Jordan Rodericks** (B.S. '09/MC) as producer for the program. In the category of "Public/Current/Community Affairs - Program/Special," VCU TV/HD received an Emmy for "Chop Suey," produced by **Alexander Germanotta** (B.F.A. '08/A).

"We are really excited about winning these awards," says Dan Brazda, VCU TV/HD executive producer. "Being awarded the Emmys is especially gratifying because we are a college operation that is essentially competing against broadcast stations and production facilities."

VCU TV/HD is one of the first student-run operations in the country to produce programming in a high-definition format. A partnership with Community Idea Stations, owned by Commonwealth Public Broadcasting, allows the programs to run on WCVW Richmond PBS channel 57 (cable channel 24 in the Richmond area).

Program downloads and a broadcast schedule are available at [www.vcutvhd.vcu.edu/shows/schedule.html](http://www.vcutvhd.vcu.edu/shows/schedule.html). The programs also can be downloaded for free on iTunes in both the iPod and HD versions.

VCU TV  
HD

"Being awarded the Emmys is especially gratifying because we are a college operation that is essentially competing against broadcast stations and production facilities." – Dan Brazda

## VCU adds buildings to campus map

Earlier this year VCU opened two new health sciences buildings, augmenting educational and research space on its MCV Campus.

The \$71.5 million, eight-story Molecular Medicine Research Building opened in April with 125,000 square feet of research space that houses 48 principal investigators and their staffs. The open layout of the laboratory floors encourages interaction among researchers across disciplines.

The facility incorporates key energy-conservation features, such as water-efficient fixtures and environmentally friendly, low-hydrocarbon construction materials, and is registered with

the U.S. Green Building Council in anticipation of receiving sustainability certification.

In June, VCU dedicated a \$20 million addition to the VCU School of Dentistry, named in honor of dental alumnus and former Board of Visitors Rector **W. Baxter Perkinson Jr., D.D.S.** (D.D.S. '70/D).

The four-story, 55,000-square-foot structure connects the existing Wood and Lyons buildings and enables the school to increase student enrollment in dentistry and dental hygiene, to expand research and to improve patient access to care.

The new building also increases the school's laboratory space for the Philips Institute of Oral and Craniofacial Molecular Biology, whose researchers collaborate with faculty at the VCU Massey Cancer Center and the School of Engineering.

## Network joins regional resources

VCU joined a national network of sites selected to improve and enhance the birth-to-career educational pipeline.

Through Bridging Richmond, a partnership of education, business, nonprofit, community, civic and philanthropic groups, VCU will coordinate existing regional resources for students in Richmond and the surrounding counties of Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico.

The program is one of four sites adopting this collaborative approach to education. The program also is being set up in Hayward, Calif., Houston and Indianapolis.

The network will be supported by Living Cities, a collaborative of 21 of the world's largest foundations and financial institutions, and the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities, a partnership of 39 urban universities, including VCU, that have committed to ensuring their institutions guide the revitalization of their communities.

**Jo Lynne DeMary, Ed.D.**, (M.Ed. '72/E), executive director of the VCU School of Education Center for School Improvement, will provide leadership for the partnership.



## New Ph.D. program focuses on nano

Beginning in January 2010, VCU will start training a new generation of chemists and physicists to explore the rapidly emerging fields of nanoscience and nanotechnology through a new interdisciplinary doctoral degree program. VCU is the first major research university in the state to offer such a program, and one of only a handful of programs in the U.S.

Developed by faculty in the VCU departments of Chemistry and Physics, the program will cross-train students in the physical sciences of chemistry and physics with particular focus on how the science changes at reduced dimensions. The proposed curriculum will help prepare students for positions in industry or government research by providing them an opportunity to work beyond traditional scientific boundaries to examine the theoretical underpinnings of nano.

## NSF grants target math instruction

The National Science Foundation awarded \$10 million in grants to VCU researchers to improve mathematics instruction and student learning in middle schools and rural elementary schools in Virginia.

The initiatives will prepare teachers to serve as mathematics specialists who in turn coach other teachers. In addition, research will be conducted to determine the impact of the specialists on instruction and student learning.

The project will be carried out by VCU's Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics and the School of Education, in collaboration with the University of Virginia, Norfolk State University, Longwood University, Virginia Tech, the University of Maryland, the Virginia Department of Education, the General Assembly, the Virginia Mathematics and Science Coalition and participating school systems.

## Administrative notes

**Michael Sesnowitz, Ph.D.**, retired as dean of the VCU School of Business, joining the Department of Economics as a professor. David Urban, Ph.D., who has served on the VCU faculty for 20 years, will replace him as interim dean while a national search to fill the position is conducted.

Branding innovator **Kelly O'Keefe** joined the VCU Brandcenter's leadership team as managing director. He had served as a professor and director of the school's executive education program since 2006.



The award-winning Hunton Student Center serves as the first student commons for the MCV Campus. Renovations for this modern student facility preserve the historical features of the building, such as original church pews.

The five-year grants will build on the success of an earlier NSF-supported research effort led by the mathematics and applied mathematics department to improve elementary school math instruction and student learning in urban and suburban Virginia communities through the introduction of mathematics specialists.

## Award honors Hunton renovation

VCU's Hunton Student Center is one of five recipients of the Association of College Unions International Facility Design Award, which recognizes excellence in design of college unions as well as other student-centered campus buildings.

"The award validates our belief that saving this historical structure by creating a modern student center, while honoring its past as a church, was more than the right thing to do," says Tim Reed, Ph.D., director of University Student Commons and Activities.

The \$6 million renovation project, completed in 2006, transformed the 166-year-old former Baptist church into a comfortable gathering place for students on the MCV Campus. The three-story center includes a student lounge, dining and recreation areas, and study rooms and offices.

## Team engineers OR table prototype

At VCU's first da Vinci Day celebration in April, a group of VCU engineering, business and arts students unveiled the prototype of a \$500 operating table for the developing world.

A standard operating table can cost up to \$80,000, a prohibitive cost for many hospitals in Third World countries. For less than 3 percent of the price to manufacture surgical tables in the U.S., the full-size, hospital-grade

prototype table assembles with just four pieces and folds down to fit into an easy-to-ship 24-inch cardboard cube.

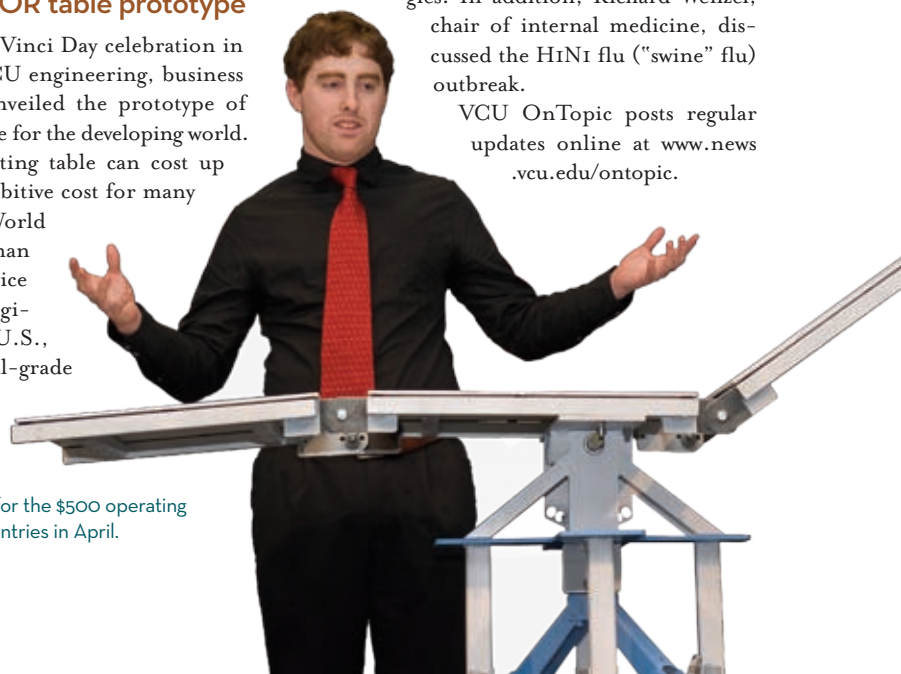
The student team, working through the VCU da Vinci Center for Innovation in Product Design and Development, included Michael Mercier, Jennifer Koch, Lauren O'Neill, Ana Cuison, Skylar Roebuck, Mike Garrett and Chris Johnson. An earlier team completed the project concept in spring 2008. The final phase, set to begin this spring, will focus on producing and marketing the table.

## VCU experts discuss current events

VCU OnTopic, a new online feature, highlights the expertise of professors throughout VCU, showcasing their research and teaching interests in an analysis of real-world events. Each OnTopic segment includes video clips of an individual professor discussing a topic and a short article summarizing the professor's view on the subject. Initial OnTopic interviews have focused on various angles of the economic downturn, including presentations by Micah McCreary, associate professor of psychology, on job-loss jitters; and George Hoffer, professor of economics, on the U.S. auto industry's struggles. In addition, Richard Wenzel, chair of internal medicine, discussed the H1N1 flu ("swine" flu) outbreak.

VCU OnTopic posts regular updates online at [www.news.vcu.edu/ontopic](http://www.news.vcu.edu/ontopic).

A seven-member student team, including Mike Garrett (right), unveiled the prototype for the \$500 operating table for developing countries in April.





## Students earn national scholarships

VCU students thrived in the highly competitive application process for national scholarships in spring 2009.

Recent graduate **Jessica Hite** (M.S. '09/H&S) and Jessica Jagger, a doctoral student in the School of Social Work, became the fifth and sixth VCU students to receive funding from the Fulbright Program in the past four years. Hite and Jagger will use their awards to conduct research in Panama and Jamaica, respectively.

Syed Mohammed Karim, a senior majoring in chemistry, became the sixth VCU student to receive a Goldwater Scholarship in the past three years. The Goldwater is the premier national scholarship for undergraduate math, science and engineering students.

Ian McMahon and Nataliya Slinko, both M.F.A. candidates in the Department of Sculpture and Extended Media, became the fifth and sixth students from the program to be named Javits Fellows in the past six years. Jacob K. Javits Fellowships are awarded to graduate students of superior academic ability in the arts, humanities and social sciences. There are typically only five to seven Javits recipients each year in the studio arts, which include sculpture.

**Nicole Constance** (B.S. '09/H&S; B.S. '09/WS) received a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship to support her pursuit of doctoral studies. She'll use the three-year fellowship to attend Penn State University to participate in Ph.D. programs in human development and family studies, and in demography.

**Conschetta Wright** (B.S. '07/N; M.P.H. '09/M) received a Critical Language Scholarship to study Arabic in an eight-week immersion program in Tunisia.

## Rice Center gains LEED certification

The Walter L. Rice Education Building at the VCU Rice Center is the first building in Virginia to receive the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED platinum certification, the highest sustainability rating possible. LEED, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is the council's leading rating system for designing and constructing the world's greenest, most energy-efficient and high-performing buildings.

The \$2.6 million, 4,900-square-foot education building opened in 2008 and houses lecture and laboratory rooms for classes, a conference room and administrative offices. The building was named the region's Overall Project of the Year in the Mid-Atlantic Construction magazine's Best of 2009 awards program.

To view a video detailing the building's sustainable strategies for efficient energy use, lighting, water and material use, visit <http://go.vcu.edu/ricecentervideo>.

## Research report

### Study sheds light on how malaria parasite, red blood cells interact

VCU Life Sciences researchers have discovered a new mechanism the malaria parasite uses to enter human red blood cells, which could lead to the development of a vaccine cocktail to fight the mosquito-borne disease.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, between 350 million and 500 million cases of malaria occur worldwide annually, and more than 1 million people, mostly children living in sub-Saharan Africa, die each year from it.

The team examined how the malaria parasite interacts with red blood cells. The findings revealed that the EBL-1 molecule is the specific attachment site used by the parasite on glycophorin B, a molecule found on the surface of human red blood cells.

"Down the road, the EBL-1 molecule could be used as a vaccine target against malaria as part of a multivalent vaccine, or vaccine cocktail," says principal investigator Ghislaine Mayer, Ph.D., assistant professor in VCU's Department of Biology.

Mayer worked with researchers from the VCU Department of Biology, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the Department of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology at Harvard University.

### Researchers identify gene linked to liver cancer progression

VCU Massey Cancer Center researchers have identified a gene that plays a key role in regulating liver cancer progression, a discovery that could one day lead to new targeted therapeutic strategies to fight the highly aggressive disease.

Hepatocellular carcinoma, HCC or liver cancer, is the fifth most common cancer and the third leading cause of cancer deaths in the world. Treatment options for HCC include chemotherapy, chemoembolization, ablation and proton-beam therapy. Liver transplantation offers the best chance for a cure in patients with small tumors and significant associated liver disease.

The study, led by principal investigator Devanand Sarkar, Ph.D., MBBS, was published in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*.



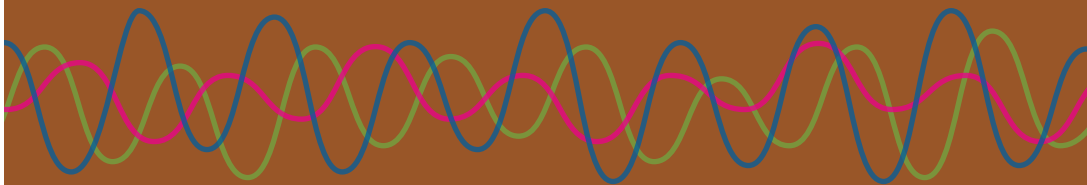
### Hearing loss study finds regions of brain convert to sense of touch

VCU School of Medicine researchers have discovered that adult animals with hearing loss actually re-route the sense of touch into the hearing parts of the brain.

In the study, published online in the Early Edition of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, the team reported a phenomenon known as cross-modal plasticity in the auditory system of adult animals. Cross-modal plasticity refers to the replacement of a damaged sensory system by one of the remaining ones. In this case, the sense of hearing is replaced with touch.

About 15 percent of American adults suffer from some form of hearing impairment, which can significantly impact quality of life, especially in the elderly.

The findings provide researchers and clinicians with insight into how the adult brain retains the ability to rewire itself on a large scale, as well as the factors that could complicate treatment of hearing loss with hearing aids or cochlear implants.





# Welcome

to the





# family

New Virginia Commonwealth University President Michael Rao, Ph.D., joins the campus community with excitement for advancing Virginia's premier urban research institution

Michael Rao, Ph.D., began his 24-hour, seven-day-a-week job as president of Virginia Commonwealth University on July 1, 2009, and just seems to thrive on every minute of it. As he tends to the nonstop demands of the state's largest university, Dr. Rao makes every effort to involve his tight-knit family—wife Monica and sons Miguel, who turns 10 in November, and Aiden, who turned 1 in May—in his VCU duties.

Since moving to Richmond, Va., from Michigan, the entire family has immersed itself in all things VCU. One of their VCU experiences came in late August when the Raos helped members of the freshman class of 2013 move into their residence halls on the Monroe Park Campus. Sporting VCU gear, the family warmly welcomed students to their new home.

"Move-in day was an enjoyable time for us because we finally got our chance to meet so many students—the people who are at the center of our mission and work," Dr. Rao says. "The students with whom we spoke made our entire week very fulfilling."

President Rao hopes his family will be an integral—and visible—part of the presidency. Monica Rao, a native of Bombay, now Mumbai, India, already has begun work bolstering relations among VCU's international alumni, a growing and important part of the university's alumni family. Miguel's and Aiden's roles are less formal but perhaps equally important. "My sons make such a big difference in my understanding of how rapidly students are changing," Dr. Rao says.

Dr. Rao's rise in academia seems unprecedented, but the presidency at VCU is his third in higher education. Despite his relative youth, the 43-year-old served as president at Central Michigan University for nine years, one of the three longest-serving presidents among Michigan's 15 public universities. Previously, he served as chancellor of a campus in Montana and president of another campus in California.

"I was drawn to VCU because it is a university that fosters entrepreneurship, innovation, access, student and alumni

success and diversity," Dr. Rao says. "As I look to the future, these qualities will flourish as VCU solidifies its position as a first-choice university for many of the most motivated and talented students from Virginia and beyond."

More than 20 years of experience in higher education have taught President Rao the importance of challenging students and his faculty colleagues to high standards. Excellence is a central theme of his leadership and he uses every opportunity to emphasize it. At the 2009 New Student Convocation, Dr. Rao inspired the crowd of more than a thousand, telling them that he expected them to be "in no way average" and "in every way excellent," reminding them that they are—and will forever be—an important part of VCU and its reputation.

"Every time I have ever challenged students to new heights, they not only appreciate it but also thrive on it and often exceed my expectations," he says. "This is at the core of what I think is going to help make America successful and competitive. It is also at the core of convincing people to live the fullest and most rewarding lives possible."

Another important lesson President Rao learned in his years of working in higher education, particularly public higher education, involves the challenges of delivering world-class learning opportunities in troubled economic times. Sometimes, he says, a lack of resources makes "our challenges clearer" and inspires creative thinking.

"It is in these economic downturns that we find opportunities to position ourselves for the upswing that inevitably follows," Dr. Rao says. "Sometimes the economic cycles are trying to tell us to rethink what we know today."

Dr. Rao believes that VCU sits in a good position to face today's economic challenges, especially in terms of its infrastructure and the VCU 2020 strategic plan, which since 2006 has resulted in significantly improved retention rates, the hiring of renowned interdisciplinary faculty and the establishment of successful academic programs such as the University College.

**Left:** VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D., walks along Shafer Court with his two sons, Miguel and Aiden, and his wife, Monica.



"One thing is clear," he says. "We are going to be very deliberate about being a well-recognized, competitive, urban public research university committed to student success at all levels."

At the August Board of Visitors meeting, Dr. Rao endorsed that commitment and revealed his top priority: enhancing the student experience at VCU. "Everything we do must be done in the context of strengthening the living and learning environment for our students to ensure their success," he says.

The living and learning environment includes all of the realms in which students and professors learn including libraries, student learning technologies and residential learning-living spaces.

Dr. Rao also emphasizes that as a human development organization, VCU must couple the successful student experience with excellent faculty and staff.

"You are going to hear this again and again — everyone who is associated with VCU must be the very, very best and nothing but," he says. "We need to be sure that we reward performance and commitment to student learning and discovery competitively" across both of VCU's campuses.

He emphasizes the importance of cross-campus, interdisciplinary collaborations to support the university's research mission and to support teaching, learning and patient care.

Dr. Rao also told the Board of Visitors that he's focused on cancer research, treatment and patient care and has reinforced this priority in meetings with legislators, the governor, the university's vice presidents and the VCU Health System leadership.

"It is a very important thing for us to be rallied around," Dr. Rao says. "Virginia ranks 12th not only for population but also for the raw number of cancer cases and cancer deaths. It is hard to rationalize that of the 12 most populous states in the U.S., Virginia is one of only two that does not have a NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center. We must elevate the VCU Massey Cancer Center's NCI designation to the comprehensive level."

His other priorities include strengthening the university's national academic profile and increasing the level of sponsored research. Dr. Rao recognizes that these goals are resource-intensive. To that end, he proposes diversification, explaining that VCU cannot be too dependent on any one revenue source, including public funding. He suggests that as a public university, VCU must ensure that it has sufficient resources, such as scholarships, to recruit qualified and motivated students who will benefit from being at VCU.

President Michael Rao, Ph.D., greets students at Cary and Belvidere Residential College during Aug. 15 move-in day.



"Everything we do must be done in the context of strengthening the living and learning environment for our students to ensure their success."

- Michael Rao, Ph.D.



"Aggressive scholarship fundraising campaigns with our alumni and friends — many of whom struggled financially when they were students and therefore understand the needs of our students — as well as looking at other ways to increase all of our revenues could help to minimize the nonscholarship portion of financial aid," Dr. Rao says.

The president will look to VCU alumni to take an active role in the VCU community, and he will make a concerted effort in the coming year to travel around the state and the country to meet with VCU alumni.

"I have learned over the years that there is no university stronger than one that is engaged with active alumni, and we will be exploring ways to engage all alumni and friends as partners in shaping the future of this great institution," he says.

Dr. Rao takes to heart VCU's commitment to provide an excellent educational learning experience for its students, many of whom, like alumni, are the first in their families to attend college. His face lights up when he talks about students. "I absolutely re-energize whenever I see and talk with students. It's what fuels the fire I have always had for higher education," he says. "My most rewarding experiences have been meeting students and watching them graduate. Commencement is a time every year that reminds me of why I chose to do what I have dedicated my life to doing."



Joseph Ornato, M.D., (left) professor and chairman of VCU's Department of Emergency Medicine, takes VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D., on a tour of the VCU Medical Center's emergency department.



# VCU's first lady Monica Rao reflects on her newest role

Half-time member of the faculty, wife of a university president, mother of two active boys, watercolorist, graphic designer and VCU's first lady, Monica Rao looks forward to the opportunities for engagement that her family's move to Richmond brings.

As the spouse of a university president who dedicates "virtually all of his time to leading and advancing the mission of the university," she says it's only natural for her and their two sons, Miguel and Aiden, to also be deeply engaged in activities that support both the president and VCU. "I enjoy serving as a liaison between the university and many

of its constituencies," says Mrs. Rao, who served as university outreach liaison at Central Michigan University for nine years. "The most important lesson I have learned as 'first lady' is that a university's greatest assets are its people and their creative ideas and ability to implement them to the benefit of society."

International alumni comprise one of VCU's most important — but previously untapped — audiences. As head of a new VCU Alumni Association effort, Mrs. Rao will work to "engage international alumni in the life of the university."

Her goals for this part-time administrative faculty position are ambitious. She is already forming an advisory

board and is working closely with the Office of International Education, the Office of Alumni Relations and each of the schools and the college to establish three chapters in countries with the biggest populations of VCU alumni.

"International alumni can effectively serve as ambassadors for VCU, connecting the university globally," she says.

Mrs. Rao knows this firsthand. She earned a diploma in commercial art/design from Nirmala Niketan Polytechnic Institute in India. She also received a bachelor's in art/graphic design with a minor in business administration and a master's in leadership from CMU and maintains strong ties to both of her alma maters.

She was immersed in the creative arts and music from her early childhood years and was significantly influenced by her artistic family. Her grandfathers and uncles are renowned Indian classical musicians and her paternal uncle was a professional fine artist whom she watched in his studio as young girl.

"I am intrigued by sensations that are created by looking at various colors and use vibrant colors that lift my spirits. I am attracted to unusual textures found in nature and work on a variety of surfaces focusing on images with the use of heightened color, texture and movement," she says. "My imagination unfolds with swift and swirling colorful strokes, creating abstract imagery and a world of possibilities."

Her work has been exhibited at galleries and shows in India, Michigan, Chicago and Montana, and she hopes to share her paintings with the VCU and Richmond communities. That is, if her other roles permit her the time.

"With a half-time position at the university, two very active young children and other duties as a university president's spouse, finding time to devote to artwork is becoming challenging," she says. "In the near future, I look forward to investing a few hours a week in painting."



A professional watercolorist, Mrs. Monica Rao enjoys experimenting with different textured surfaces to create vibrant abstract paintings and collages, such as "Royal Falls," a 24-by-36-inch mixed media on canvas.

## Welcoming receptions

The VCU Alumni Association invites alumni to attend one of the following Richmond-area receptions welcoming President Michael Rao and Mrs. Monica Rao. Each reception will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. — with remarks at 7 — and includes hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. Advance registration is required as space is limited at each event. To RSVP, visit [www.MeetPresidentRao.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.MeetPresidentRao.vcu-mcvalumni.org).

Additional alumni introduction receptions will be scheduled outside the greater Richmond area. Go online for upcoming dates: [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org).

*Nov. 18*  
Doubletree Hotel Richmond  
Airport, Sandston, Va.

*Nov. 24*  
Independence Golf Club  
Midlothian, Va.







# SMART PICK

VCU's new men's basketball coach **Shaka Smart** readies for his first head coaching gig

By Erin Egan

A suit and several dress shirts hang in plastic on the office door of Virginia Commonwealth University men's basketball coach Shaka Smart. The garments lie in wait just in case the first-time head coach needs to change for a spur-of-the-moment appearance. "That's one of the big differences about being a head coach," Smart says. "You've got to be ready."

Aside from the clothes, very few personal effects adorn Smart's office. "It's not me yet," he says of the space overlooking the basketball court in the Stuart C. Siegel Center. "But we've been working so much that we'll worry about that later."

At his introductory press conference April 2, 2009, Smart vowed to hit the ground running. He kept that promise and, in the first three months on the job, logged long hours in the office and on the road. He and his hard-working staff signed three strong recruits in April, May and June.

"We added one each month we've been here," Smart says. "I joke with the staff that if we keep that up we'll be in good shape."

Smart, the 10th head coach in the VCU program's 41-year history, replaced Anthony Grant, who accepted the top job at the University of Alabama in March. Smart arrived after serving as an assistant coach under Billy Donovan, the highly respected head coach of two-time national champion University of Florida. Before that, Smart's resume included positions at Clemson University, the University of Akron, Dayton University and California University of Pennsylvania. Throughout his climb up the coaching ladder, the 32-year-old earned a reputation as one of the brightest minds and strongest recruiters in the Division I ranks.

"Shaka is not only a great recruiter but one of the best in college basketball," says Norwood Teague, VCU's director of athletics. "One can see this from his past success at Clemson and Florida, as well as his recent success since his arrival at VCU."

Aside from filling staff positions and recruiting new talent, Smart's top priorities included developing relationships with his players and easing them through the switch from one coach to the next. He took the squad out to eat to get to know one another. "Coach Smart showed us that we were a team again," says VCU junior center Larry Sanders. "He was very understanding of our situation and helped the transition go smoothly."

Also high on Smart's agenda: making sure his players keep up with their studies. A magna cum laude history graduate of Kenyon College, with a master's degree in social science, Smart serves as a model for athletes earning their degrees. "I expect our players to pursue a degree with as much fervor as they pursue excellence on the basketball court," he says.

On the court, Smart knows the coming season will be a test for the Eric Maynor-less Rams. Maynor, the best player in school history and the Rams' designated leader, graduated in May and

made the leap to the NBA. Smart holds no illusions that replacing a player of his caliber will happen overnight.

"Even though we only lost one starter, it feels like more than that," Smart says. "Eric provided leadership, he provided energy, he provided a positive example and he provided somebody at the end of a game who could win it for you."

The question of who will guide the Rams on the court in 2009-10 remains to be seen. Certainly, the team will look to Sanders, the Rams' most talented player, to take control. "He's ready to step into that role," Smart says. "The best thing for Larry is that Eric provided such a good example to follow."

Smart's game plan includes a fast offensive pace, with lots of full-court pressure defense. The word *havoc*, written in red marker on a whiteboard in his office, reflects what he and his staff hope to achieve. "I would like to play an exciting style that can make opponents less comfortable playing their style," Smart says.

Rabid Ram fans will also play a role in flustering opponents. "I've heard the fans here don't take a back seat to anyone," Smart says. He anticipates a fun, frenzied environment in the Siegel Center with fans acting as the Rams' sixth man. "We want to make it so that when people come in here they fear not just our style of play and our players but the whole atmosphere," Smart says.

After a busy summer traveling to Cincinnati, Myrtle Beach, S.C., Orlando, Fla., and Las Vegas to recruit, Smart returned to Richmond eager for the season — and his first game — to begin. "I'm sure there will be some butterflies," he says, "just because this is something that I have worked toward and wanted to do for a long time."

Positioned on the sideline, clad in a suit just like the one hanging on his office door, this first-time head coach stands ready.

*Erin Egan is a contributing writer for Shafer Court Connections.*

## Where are they now?




On June 25, 2009, the Utah Jazz chose 6'2" point guard **Eric Maynor** (B.I.S. '09/H&S) with the 20th pick in the NBA draft. Maynor ranks as the first VCU player picked in the first round of the draft and the first Colonial Athletic Association player selected since 1999.



The Minnesota Lynx chose 6'5" center **Quanitra Hollingsworth** (B.S. '08/H&S) as the ninth pick in the 2009 WNBA draft. At midseason, the 20-year-old rookie proved impressive as she logged quality minutes coming off the bench for the Lynx.





# LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!

*By Erin Egan*

## **Peep This gives young African-American men a voice through film**

Donta Dixon, 15, and Jordan Best, 13, huddle around a glowing computer monitor in the office of the Department of African American Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. On screen plays a documentary the duo produced, wrote and directed. They intently watch the nearly completed work and quietly discuss possible tweaks as Best takes copious notes.

Dixon and Best emanate calm despite the fact that in less than three weeks, as participants in Peep This — a VCU program created to engage young African-American males through filmmaking — they will screen their work at the famed Byrd Theatre.

Peep This began in 2008, the idea of Shawn Utsey, Ph.D., chair of VCU's Department of African American Studies and associate professor in the Department of Psychology. Inspiration struck after meeting Haile Gerima, an Ethiopian filmmaker who presented one of his films at VCU during the university's Black History Month celebration.





Photo Shawn Utsey, Ph.D.



Photo Shawn Utsey, Ph.D.



Photo Shawn Utsey, Ph.D.

Peep This participants, who range in age from 13 to 17, learn all aspects of documentary filmmaking, from researching to interviewing to filming to editing.

"Haile and I talked about the problems faced by black males," Utsey says. "He said that one way to address the issue would be to get cameras in their hands and let them tell their story."

Running with the suggestion, Utsey proposed a collaborative effort between the Department of African American Studies, the Department of Photography and Film, the College of Humanities and Sciences' doctoral program in media, art and text, and the Richmond-based East District Family Resource Center. He earned a grant through the VCU Council for Community Engagement.

The first session, or cycle, ran for 11 weeks, starting Aug. 30, 2008. With additional funding from Capital One, a second six-week session took place in fall 2008. Another community-engagement grant, plus funding from Capital One and the Virginia Film Office, allowed a third group of students to convene for six weeks starting in July 2009. Utsey hopes more sessions will follow. "The cycles appear when we get the money," he says.

The number of Peep This participants varies from five to 10, with students ranging in age from 13 to 17. They meet Fridays and Saturdays to learn all aspects of documentary filmmaking, from researching to interviewing to filming to editing. Guest speakers from the film industry also make appearances. At the end of each session, participants grouped into teams of two or three complete a five-minute documentary on the subject of their choice.

"Each time we've done the program, the projects have improved," Utsey says.

Students apply for participation in Peep This and Utsey usually has about twice as many applications as available spots. Selecting the candidates proves a challenging task for him. "It's really difficult to let anyone down, particularly when students want to do something," Utsey says.

Best, a high school freshman from Chesterfield, Va., inherited his love of movies from his father, who had an interest in film. Through Peep This, Best discovered that "I like to write stories and like the shooting part of making a movie," he says.

His teammate, Richmond native Dixon, relishes the editing process but finds the overall program an educational experience. "It has opened my eyes to film," he says. "I'm really enjoying it."

Utsey teaches the technical aspects of the program but relies on several enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers for additional help. **Shanika Smiley** (B.F.A. '04/A), a VCU sculpture and extended media graduate, assists students with the editing process. "I enjoy the fact that I'm encouraging young people," she says. "I want them to feel like when they get older they can do anything."

**Jannida Chase** (M.F.A. '09/A) graduated from VCU with a master's in fine arts with a concentration in photography and film and began helping with the program at its inception. "It's a medium that I love," she says. "And being involved with a program that exposes students to film is so positive."

Utsey — and participants' parents — notice behavioral changes in students over the course of a cycle. Kids gain focus, build confidence and make connections with fellow budding filmmakers. "I've been really pleased with how well they get along and how well they work together," Utsey says.

Back in the editing room, 16-year-old Charles Johnson of Richmond works on his film about hip-hop music, fashion and peer pressure. "I'm amazed it takes weeks of work to get this little bit," he says of his five-minute product. "It's hectic. But I love it and feel proud of it."

At the July 12 screening at the Byrd Theatre, the audience of nearly 100 buzzes with excitement. Johnson seems delighted by the response to his project. Dixon and Best practically beam with pride about reaction to their documentary of the Peep This program. "It's a big deal that this many people want to see what we think," Dixon says.

Utsey might be the proudest of all. He would be thrilled if any of his students decided on a career in film, but ultimately, he says, "I'm hoping that they just have a positive experience and that something might click."

*Erin Egan is a contributing writer for Shafer Court Connections.*





# Celebrate VCU

Connect • Engage • Serve





# The VCU Alumni Association's 2009-11 strategic plan creates a culture of connection

When asked to provide feedback on the alumni association's role at Virginia Commonwealth University, graduates responded with a common theme: service.

"Alumni want to give back to the university and pay it forward to future generations of students," says VCU Alumni Association President **Donna M. Dalton** (M.Ed. '00/E). And, she adds, they clearly see the alumni association as a catalyst for promoting service — to the university and to the community.

Looking at how the association can adopt an agenda that answers this alumni call, the VCUEAA board of directors engaged in a year-long planning process to develop a comprehensive strategy that will help guide and shape the alumni association in the coming years. The plan includes three priorities, with service topping the list.

## Service to VCU and the community

The VCUEAA's first priority acts as an extension of the VCU community and will provide needed resources, whether expertise or time, to support university-community partnerships.

"We want to involve our partners at VCU, such as the Division of Community Engagement, to make sure whatever service projects we're doing, we're doing them in a collaborative way," Dalton says. "But it's not just about giving back in the Richmond area."

In fact, the association plans to develop a system for identifying and recognizing alumni outreach and participation to create a network of VCU alumni doing good deeds around the world.

"It's not about VCUEAA deciding what our service priorities are and creating programs for them," says Gordon A. McDougall, assistant vice president for university alumni relations. "It's about showing your VCU-ness and Ram spirit and going out there and making change, effecting change wherever you live."

It could be a simple act of donating food while wearing a VCU T-shirt or ball cap, he says, or a larger alumni-generated initiative that pulls in the association.

Other ideas the board plans to explore include providing a menu of opportunities and choices for giving time, talent and funds to further community service; working with local schools in Richmond and its surrounding areas; and helping connect faculty research with active community engagement initiatives.

"Our goal is to reach out to our communities by working with various organizations that have made commitments within our localities," says **Stephanie L. Holt** (B.S. '74/E), chair of the Service to the Community Committee. "We want to ensure that we aren't duplicating efforts and that we are supporting important, ongoing events and engaging the appropriate resources both within VCU and the communities."

## University engagement and student-alumni programs

The VCUEAA set its second priority as expanding alumni engagement with students and enhancing existing and new student-focused programs.

"We want to find ways to connect to students, to make sure they're engaged in opportunities for service with our alumni," Dalton says. "We also want to make sure we're motivating students to become actively involved with the VCUEAA while they're on campus so when they receive their diploma, one of the things they give to themselves is a membership in the alumni association."

Last year, the association started two major traditions that serve as bookends for alumni-student engagement — the Ram Spirit Walk for freshmen in August and the Your Passport to the World celebration for new graduates in May.

"This is an exciting time for the alumni association. Donna's new engagement initiative will allow us to really focus on the core of who we are," says **Aaron R. Gilchrist Jr.** (B.S. '03/MC), chair of the University Engagement and Student Programs Committee. "If the association is truly to keep our members connected to each other and our alma mater, then we have to put energy into actively engaging current students and leaders at the university in a meaningful way. I'm excited to be a part of this effort."

Under this priority, the VCUEAA also seeks to expand collaborations with university partners — including the MCV Alumni Association of VCU, the colleges and schools, alumni-affiliated groups, and faculty and staff — to further student-centered programs such as the Legacy Scholarship and other student awards.

## Membership Recruitment and Retention

The association's third priority — membership recruitment and retention — follows a two-year campaign to increase the number of graduates who belong to the alumni group. The growing membership base serves as the underlying foundation for the VCUEAA's other two priorities — new service projects and student-centered programs.

"These initiatives are funded through membership dues, not state money or gifts," says **Peter A. Blake** (B.A. '80/H&S; M.S. '88/MC), chair of the Membership Recruitment and Retention Committee. "The programs and services the VCUEAA offers would not be possible without the support of VCUEAA members."

In addition to continuing to build VCU pride and affiliation with alumni, the association plans to promote student and faculty membership and to explore additional benefits to enhance membership value, such as the new CareerBeam online career counseling service.

"Alumni services are not just about social programming," says Dalton, adding that the service and engagement priorities will provide a more natural means for bringing VCU graduates into the black-and-gold fold. "Alumni play a critical role in the continued success of the association's goals and, in turn, the growth of the university as a leading institution in higher education."

*Get the latest developments on the new VCUEAA strategic plan or learn how you can get involved, at [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org).*



## driving force: VCU ALUMNA BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER TO FEED THOSE IN NEED

While driving to work, **Diane Reynolds** (B.S. '78/B; M.B.A. '04/B), director of VCU's Department of Business Services, heard a startling report. In the face of the slumping economy, the Central Virginia Foodbank and its affiliated Meals on Wheels and Community Kitchen programs were struggling to provide for those in need. She recognized her department, with its ability to reach the VCU community at parking facilities, dining halls and campus bookstores, could help and immediately gathered her team.

Reynolds asked Rebecca Jones, marketing and public relations manager for Business Services, and Tamara Highsmith, sales and services manager for Dining Services, to raise awareness and recruit volunteers for a spring food drive. Drop-off locations were set up in Business Services facilities, residence halls, the VCU Medical Center and major intersections on the Monroe Park Campus. The three-day event, April 14-16, collected nearly 11 tons of food — the equivalent of 22,000 meals — from students, faculty, staff and community members.

During a recent visit to the food bank, Reynolds talked about the results of the university-wide effort.

**How did you get the idea to organize a food drive at VCU?** I heard about the critical need of the food bank — that the difficult economic times had created even more demand on their services. With the loss of jobs, a lot of major contributors and volunteers for the food bank now were actually in need. They also mentioned that the summer is a critical time for children, because about 20,000 students in the Richmond area participate in the school programs where they receive free or reduced-price meals. As soon as school lets out for the summer, they no longer have access to those meals.

**What was the response to the food drive?** It was really a collaborative effort. We had student volunteers and staff members representing dining, parking and retail, as well as members of other departments. Most of our donations came from employees, but there were student donations and some from the general public. Between all three major groups it made a pretty nice impact to the food bank. At the end of

three days, we collected 11 tons of food, so that's something to be proud of.

It was a great experience for all of those who were involved. The goal wasn't for it to be a team-building exercise for my staff, but ultimately it was. It was a way to work together for something other than their core job and interact with our customers who gave donations.

### How do you plan to expand future drives?

The Department of Business Services has probably one of the greatest opportunities to touch the most people on our campus, just because people park in our facilities every day. Because of the impact we made, we are working with Cathy Howard in the Division of Community Engagement to organize a collaborative VCU food drive this spring and cast that umbrella out to each of the pockets at VCU — student organizations and department units — that do individual food drives each year. If we have more volunteers and are able to staff even more hours, we know we can have an even greater impact.

We also learned from the food bank that monetary contributions are even more valuable than product donations because they have purchasing power to buy products cheaper than we can at the store. For them, a dollar can generate five meals. We made change buckets for people who forgot to bring food or had loose change to donate and we had such a nice response that we learned we'll need more buckets next time.

**Why do you think it's important for VCU to get involved?** We can all get wrapped up in our day-to-day activities — our jobs, our class schedules, meeting friends on campus — and we sometimes lose sight of those that are less fortunate who live right here in our community. To be able to take a few hours and give back — even just a small donation of time or money — can make a difference for those right here in our neighborhood. It's a pretty rewarding thing and we've got such big hearts at VCU.

*Interview conducted by Kim Witt, a contributing writer for Shafer Court Connections.*



# THE PLACE TO RACE

By Erin Egan

The River City earns national recognition as a runner's paradise

On Nov. 14, 2009, Richmond streets and sidewalks will fill with more than 4,000 runners and thousands more spectators and volunteers participating in the 32nd SunTrust Richmond Marathon.

Runner's World magazine dubbed the 26.2-miler the "friendliest marathon" in 2005 and has labeled Richmond a "destination runner's best friend." This year, Runner's World selected it for the magazine's first Marathon Challenge. In the challenge, the magazine's 14 editors invite participants to train and run with them for the Richmond race, while sharing tips on nutrition, injury-prevention and other essential training topics.

"It's a great honor to be chosen," says Scott Schricker, marketing director of Sports Backers, a nonprofit organization that runs the marathon. "Their editors are familiar with every race in the country, and they picked ours. They know it will be a great time."

Richmond's burgeoning reputation as one of the country's pre-eminent running locales developed in large part because of the unflagging interest and dedication of the area's grass-roots running community.

Bob Davis, a professor in VCU's Department of Health and Human Performance and a founding member of the Richmond Road Runners Club, remembers when the club included 200 members. Today, the RRRC boasts 2,500 members and holds 50 races annually, making it the third-largest road-running club in the U.S. "There's just been an explosion in people participating," Davis says.

Ed Carmines (Ph.D. '80/M), RRRC treasurer and a past club president, credits the increased participation in local road races to a couple of factors. "One is the relationship between the Richmond Road Runners Club, Sports Backers and the running stores in the area," he says. "They all support the races. Plus, we have a great group of volunteers."

Created in 1991, the Richmond-based Sports Backers brings numerous amateur and professional sporting events to the area, including the McDonald's Half Marathon and the HCA Virginia 8k that also take place on the same day as the marathon. Nearly 15,000 runners, including about 6,000 from out of state, take part in the three events.

Rick Hawkes of Chapel Hill, N.C., has run the marathon 14 times and plans to make it 15 next month. He vouches for the race's fun and supportive atmosphere. "Running through Richmond on a Saturday fall morning is some of the finest running there is," he says. "The city is lovely, the runners are pleasant and chatty, and the spectators cheer for you with such heart you find yourself thinking, *Do I know those people?*"

The positive reaction to road races in Richmond and increased participation year after year prove that the city will remain a player on the national running stage. "It's fantastic for Richmond and the running community," Carmines says. "The response supports the running community's efforts. We're called 'the friendliest marathon,' and we go out of our way to make it so."

*Erin Egan is a contributing writer for Shafer Court Connections.*

## GET INVOLVED

Want to participate in a Richmond road race but don't see yourself pounding the pavement? Members of the VCU Alumni Association's Greater Richmond Chapter help out at the SunTrust Richmond Marathon and the Ukrop's Monument Avenue 10k every fall and spring.

For the past two years, Mike Housden (B.S. '95/B), a member of the Greater Richmond Chapter of the VCUSA, has handed out water at the 10k starting line. "It's fun work, and the runners are very appreciative," he says. "It's a great opportunity for VCU alumni to get together, have fun and give back."

The Richmond Road Runners Club and Sports Backers hold numerous races throughout the year and welcome volunteers. Here are some to check out:

- James River Scramble 10k
- Carytown 10k
- Patrick Henry Half Marathon
- Komen Race for the Cure
- Maymont X-Country Festival
- Frostbite 15k
- Anthem Stride Through Time 10k
- Pony Pasture 5k
- Moonlight 4 miler
- Turkey Trot 10k

Contact Sports Backers ([www.sportsbackers.org](http://www.sportsbackers.org)) or the Richmond Road Runners Club ([www.rrrc.org](http://www.rrrc.org)) for more information. For details about getting involved through the VCU Alumni Association, visit [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org).



# THE BIG PICTURE

**CHANGING SEASONS** > Students stroll through the late fall leaves on the tree-lined streets of Virginia Commonwealth University's Monroe Park Campus as they head from James Branch Cabell Library, across Floyd Avenue, to the University Student Commons.









# Helping

By *Melanie Irvin Solaimani*

**D**avis Ratcliffe made a lasting impression on his nephew **Henry Holland** (M.D. '66/M). Ratcliffe had no children but doted on his six nephews. He instilled in them a love of reading and knowledge and encouraged them to pursue higher education.

"Uncle Davis was the only college-educated man in the generation ahead of me on either side," Holland says. "He always gave his nephews books for Christmas and birthdays, and they would always be the classics like 'Huck Finn' and 'Robinson Crusoe.'"

When Holland decided to go to college, Ratcliffe supported him every step of the way. Holland earned a bachelor's degree from Washington and Lee University and then his medical degree from the Medical College of Virginia.

"He was a great encourager through college, medical school and my residency," Holland says.

Today, Holland is helping to keep Ratcliffe's memory alive by contributing to a scholarship set up in his name in the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business. When Holland learned the scholarship might not be awarded this fall, he made a gift to keep that from happening.

Ratcliffe was a lawyer by training but did not like the adversarial nature of the profession, Holland recalls. Instead, he made a career in the insurance business, specializing in risk.

At 39, Ratcliffe volunteered to serve during World War II. He turned down an appointment as a judge advocate's general "to be in the war," Holland says. He joined the Army Air Force's 388th Bomb Group and trained pilots in England.

After the war, Ratcliffe continued in the insurance industry and wrote a book that became the standard textbook for insurance students at the time. He gave lectures on the subject and started teaching at community colleges.

"When he came to what most would consider retirement age, he was offered a position at VCU to teach insurance," Holland says.

Ratcliffe spent several years on the faculty, retiring in the late 1970s. At the time, he established the Davis Ratcliffe Insurance Award, which provides scholarship assistance to a meritorious student in the insurance and risk management program.

This year, though, the faltering economy jeopardized the distribution of many scholarships given to VCU students.

As investments plummeted, the School of Business Foundation needed about \$22,000 to ensure all of its scholarship recipients would receive their awards this fall. A letter to donors asking for help raised almost half of that. Some gave enough extra money to make sure their scholarship endowments would have enough money to provide for students next year, too, when the shortfall is projected to be even greater. Then, the foundation allocated unrestricted funds to ensure all School of Business scholarships would be awarded this fall.

"As always, our dedicated donors and alumni accepted our challenge and made sure our deserving students would not need to make the difficult decision about whether they could afford to continue their education," says Kenneth C. Blaisdell, Ph.D., associate dean for external affairs and executive director of the School of Business Foundation.



# ANDS

## Donors step in to fund underperforming scholarship endowments

Likewise, scholarships managed by the VCU Foundation experienced a deficit of about \$88,000. Donors were asked to make one-time gifts to ensure their scholarships would be given this fall, and many did. Additionally, deans of several Monroe Park Campus schools allocated unrestricted funds to bolster scholarships for their students. Combined, that left a shortfall of about \$50,000, says Thomas C. Burke, executive director of the foundation. The VCU

Foundation board of trustees voted to allocate unrestricted funds to make up the difference.

"It's been a true team effort with donors, deans and the foundation helping to meet most of our scholarship needs," Burke says.

The gift made by Holland and his wife, Brenda, ensured that School of Business senior Amanda E. Mozingo would receive the Ratcliffe Award this fall.

To Mozingo, scholarships have made a world of difference.

"The financial help I have received from the Davis Ratcliffe Award and other national and local insurance-related scholarships has provided support and encouragement for both me and my family," she says. "I am honored to represent these organizations in my endeavors and extremely grateful for the support that will allow me to graduate without a great amount of debt."

As state support shrinks, the university depends more and more on the generosity of its alumni and friends to fund scholarships, professorships and other pressing initiatives.

"Scholarships are vitally important as they allow students with academic promise, and perhaps financial need, the opportunity to pursue a degree and excel at Virginia Commonwealth University," says President Michael Rao, Ph.D. "Many of our proud alumni depended on scholarships, too, and see the need to give back and help the next generation follow the same path. We are grateful for their willingness to make

*"Our dedicated donors and alumni accepted our challenge and made sure our deserving students would not need to make the difficult decision about whether they could afford to continue their education."*

*— Kenneth C. Blaisdell, Ph.D.*

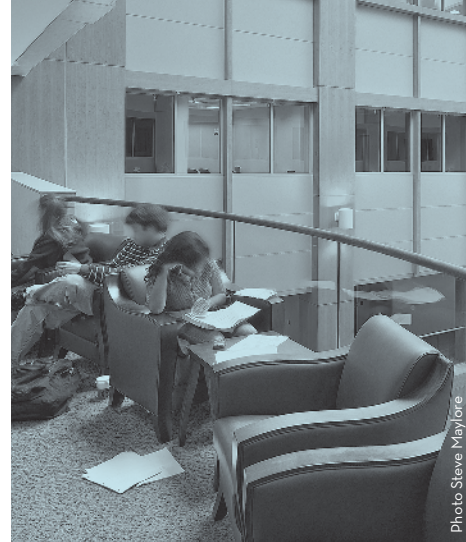
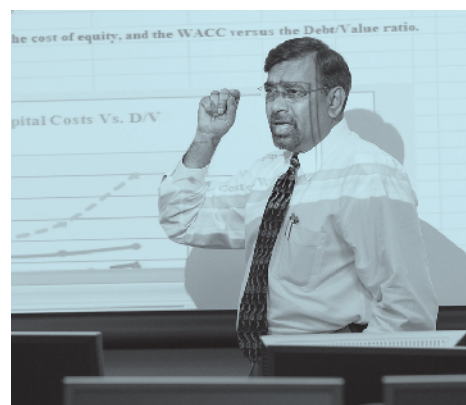


Photo Steve Mayhew

## Higher education support campaign

Grow By Degrees, a Virginia Business Higher Education Council campaign, advocates for more funding support for higher education in Virginia. This campaign emphasizes the need to increase the number of Virginians who earn degrees from public colleges, universities and community colleges to ensure better income for individuals and economic prosperity for the commonwealth. For more information or to become involved in Grow By Degrees, go to [www.growbydegrees.org](http://www.growbydegrees.org).



a difference in the lives of our students, especially during these challenging economic times."

To make a gift to any scholarship fund, visit [www.givenow.vcu.edu/centraladvancement](http://www.givenow.vcu.edu/centraladvancement).

*Melanie Irvin Solaimani (B.S. '96/MC) is a contributing writer for Shafer Court Connections.*





# jump!

by Kim Witt



**W**hen four friends snapped a photo of themselves jumping on the beach, they had no idea they were creating an Internet sensation that would sweep the globe.

Sarah Branigan, Lily Christon, Erin Johnson and Paula Ogston — who met through mutual friends while attending and working at Virginia Commonwealth University — needed a break from school and work one winter day. They ventured to Virginia Beach and shot photos of one another for fun.

“Someone caught another person in the air and we thought, ‘That’s so cool,’” says Ogston, a graduate student in the Department of Psychology. “We started taking pictures of these different kinds of poses and jumping around the beach.”

The four continued to jump everywhere they went — from cookouts and camping to spring break in North Carolina — and

began posting them to Flickr, a photo-sharing Web site. In April 2008, National Public Radio stumbled on the photos and interviewed Branigan for its “Weekend America” show.

After the story aired, the group turned the camera on others and opened up [www.jumpbecause.com](http://www.jumpbecause.com) for submissions. They spread the word locally among their friends and posted fliers in businesses, but they quickly began receiving photos from all over.

“In the beginning, it was really funny because it was just us, or people that knew us,” says Branigan, administrative director and instructor in the Department of Art Education. “Now it’s people that none of us know from all over the world. It’s been a really organic process.”

Today, visitors can search for photos from Antarctica, Brazil, Oregon and Thailand and see people jumping for everything from birthdays and travel to reuniting with friends.

“There are a lot of memorial jumps, where they jump for a particular person,” says Christon, also a graduate student in psychology. “Lots of people jump for love. The ones of us are good memories of being with friends.”

As the jumps keep coming in, the four women haven’t lost the spirit of fun they captured in the beginning. They celebrated their one-year “jump-iversary” with a shot of the group in outlandish animal masks looking out on the James River in Richmond’s Oregon Hill neighborhood.

“Anytime we get together and do jumps, it brings us back to why we started it,” says Branigan. “It’s kind of like an art project, but it’s also a social experiment and it’s just a thing that happened.”

*Kim Witt is a contributing writer for Shafer Court Connections.*



# The World ...

brought to you by the  
VCU Alumni Association

## 2010 Travel Destinations



### 2010 Trips

Jan. 25-Feb. 4

Peru

March 19-27

Monumental Rome

April 20-29

Treasures of Morocco

April 22-30

Holland and Belgium River Life Cruise

April 30-May 10

Sicily

May 18-26

Provence

June 16-27

Italian Lakes and Dalmatian Coast

**VCU** Alumni Association  
Virginia Commonwealth University

Aug. 6-14

Paris and London (via Eurostar train)

Aug. 18-Sept. 2

Scandinavian and Russian Splendors Cruise

Aug. 25-Sept. 3

Canadian Maritimes

Aug. 29-Sept. 22

Grand Journey Around the World

Sept. 5-13

Ancient Greece and Turkey Island Life Cruise

Sept. 15-23

Tuscany-Cortona

Oct. 17-30

Mediterranean Inspiration Cruise

Nov. 29-Dec. 7

Holiday Markets on the Danube

For more information call (804) 828-2586 or visit  
[www.vcu-mcvalumni.org/travel](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org/travel)



## Common connection realized at reunion takes alumni to Honduras

Reunion Weekend offers alumni the chance to visit campus, catch up with old friends and sometimes take an unexpected path in life. At the 2008 reunion dinner, two alumni reconnected over a common interest in helping others that led them on a series of trips to Honduras.

**Weldon Hazlewood** (B.S. '67/B) and **Alice Gaskill Taylor** (B.F.A. '66/A) dated in high school, but neither realized they both attended Richmond Professional Institute after graduating. They hadn't seen each other in 45 years when Taylor spotted Hazlewood's name on the attendance sheet and sought him out.

While catching up, Taylor mentioned several mission trips she took to Honduras. She brought donated fabric and sewing machines with her and taught the women of the small villages near San Pedro Sula how to sew. She returned home with hand-sewn bags, which she sold, raising nearly \$4,000 that she sent back to the communities. As a former student of RPI's fashion department, the project was a perfect fit.



Weldon Hazlewood makes friends with children in the village.

Taylor also told Hazlewood she was in search of someone to plant small vegetable gardens in residents' yards.

"Since I was a master gardener, I quickly volunteered," Hazlewood says. "Their need for vegetables is so great."

The two left in late January 2009 for a 17-day trip. Coincidentally, a group from Indiana was also there on a mission trip, and with Hazlewood's assistance, they set up 20 gardens with tomatoes, beets, carrots, mustard greens and peppers. During a subsequent visit with Taylor in May, Hazlewood continued to instruct residents on how to maintain the plants and helped add 10 new gardens.

Hazlewood and Taylor continue to reach out to fellow alumni to support their efforts in Honduras.



Alice Gaskill Taylor brings donated fabric and sewing machines to the women.

"There is a group of girls that always meet at the reunion, and one who joined for the first time this year has expressed an interest in going with us," Taylor says. "As evidenced by my chance meeting with Weldon, one can never predict the outcome of attending!"

*If you would like to join Hazlewood on a November gardening trip to Honduras, call (804) 275-0374 or e-mail [weldonhazlewood@yahoo.com](mailto:weldonhazlewood@yahoo.com).*

## Alumni return for Reunion Weekend

Reunion Weekend, April 24-27, on the Monroe Park Campus featured events and activities for Richmond Professional Institute graduates and for those in the 25-year graduating class.

Festivities began with a reception at the Colony Club on Friday evening (1). Saturday's events included a concert in Shafer Court featuring Latin music by Bio Ritmo (2 and 3), tours of VCU and Richmond, a preview of upcoming alumni travel programs and a dinner at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

Those who participated credited the university with enhancing their lives because of their educational experiences at VCU and expressed much appreciation.

The African-American Alumni Council also came back to campus for Reunion Weekend. The annual outing to Crump Park attracted its largest crowd ever, with more than 200 people. The event also included the council's first Powder Puff ladies football game (4) before the men's annual flag football contest.



Photo Marsha Polier Grossman



Photo Marsha Polier Grossman



Photo Marsha Polier Grossman



Photo Jesse DePiest





Seven new alumni join the VCUAA board including (top, from left) Mary H. Allen, Robert A. Almond, Elizabeth W. Bryant, (bottom, from left) Raymond E. Honeycutt, Natalee A. Wasiluk and James E. Williams. Not pictured: Julia M. Cain

### Alumni association welcomes new board members

The VCU Alumni Association board of directors met in May to elect four directors:

- **Mary H. Allen** (B.S. '80/E), health and physical education instructor, Midlothian High School, Midlothian, Va.
- **Elizabeth W. Bryant** (B.S. '84/MC; M.S. '04/MC), reporter, ABC 13 WSET-TV, Lynchburg, Va.
- **Natalee A. Wasiluk** (B.F.A. '86/A), personnel administrator, VCU School of World Studies
- **James E. Williams** (B.S. '84/H&S; M.S. '96/H&S), chief of police, Staunton Police Department

Three alumni also joined the board by presidential appointment:

- **Robert A. Almond** (B.S. '74/E; M.S. '85/E), special project coordinator, Virginia Department of Education, Richmond, Va.
- **Julia M. Cain** (B.S. '01/En)
- **Raymond E. Honeycutt** (B.S. '76/E), principal, St. Bridget School, Richmond, Va.

### Newest grads stamp their Passport to the World

In May, more than 500 graduates and their guests commemorated their VCU experience with a party at the Science Museum of Virginia.

Your Passport to the World — sponsored by the VCU Office of Alumni Relations, the VCU Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services and the VCU Student Government Association — was held the Wednesday before graduation as the centerpiece of a week of Commencement activities.

"The idea behind Commencement Week was to make graduation more than just a Saturday morning affair," says Rob Brodsky, director of membership and marketing for VCU Alumni Relations. The inaugural party, which he expects to become a tradition, "was a fantastic way for graduates to cap off their experience at VCU."

### Benefit spotlight: Short-term health insurance

Your VCU Alumni Association provides access to a variety of essential services. One of those services — short-term health insurance — is especially relevant in today's economic climate.

New graduates and alumni currently out of work could be facing a common dilemma — no medical coverage. GradMed, a short-term solution provided by American Insurance Administrators, one of the industry's leading carriers, offers immediate coverage that can last up to 18 months. Limitations apply, but for most situations, GradMed will provide the coverage you need.

Don't go without medical insurance. As a VCU graduate, you have a better option.

VCU alumni receive a special group discount for GradMed. To learn more visit [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org) and look for the "Featured Benefit."



**Spirit sculpture.** Created by alumnus **Tim Blum** (M.F.A. '94/A), VCU's newest, large-scale, interactive sculpture — "Ram's Horns" — stands outside the University Student Commons as a symbol of school spirit.





As Virginia Commonwealth University alumni, we engage a world that's ever evolving. We apply street-smart solutions to local and global challenges. As members of the VCU Alumni Association, we offer leadership, service and financial support to preserve and enhance the university's mission of producing graduates whose expertise enables them to drive excellence where they live. **We create change. We move the needle. We make a dent.**

Join today • [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org) • (804) 828-2586

V i r g i n i a C o m m o n w e a l t h U n i v e r s i t y

**VCU**.edu



*“My VCU degrees allow me to make a dent in the world of crime solving by providing information, evidence and testimony in murder investigations and criminal trials throughout the commonwealth.”*



– Leah L.E. Bush (M.S. '79/H&S; M.D. '84/M), chief medical examiner, commonwealth of Virginia, VCUAA member since 2000

*“Just as VCU prepared me for lifelong learning, as a professor, I believe I made a difference by preparing students for life and a career. Today, my active participation in the alumni association allows me to support VCU and say ‘thanks.’”*



– Eugene Hunt (B.S. '59/B; M.S. '61/B), VCU professor emeritus, VCUAA lifetime member since 2005

*“Helping people live comfortably and protect their families by using the skills I honed at VCU is how I’ve made a dent. Being an active member of the alumni association also provides opportunities to help others by making personal and professional connections.”*



– Gaurav “G” Shrestha, CFP (B.S. '03/B), financial adviser, Virginia Asset Management, VCUAA lifetime member since 2006

## Affiliate news

### RPI Alumni Council plans for 2010 reunion

Join Richmond Professional Institute alumni at Reunion Weekend April 23-25, 2010. A special celebration will honor the 50-year Class of 1960. If you graduated in 1960 and would like to help plan the reunion, call (804) 828-7020 or e-mail [dstout@vcu.edu](mailto:dstout@vcu.edu).

RPI alumni also can join the RPI Alumni Council, which is dedicated to keeping the foundation of VCU alive and helping RPI graduates maintain their friendships and involvement with the university.

### Hampton Roads alumni chapter reactivates

This summer, alumni from Hampton Roads met to reactivate the area’s chapter. If you’d like information about the chapter, contact **Pamela McKinney** (B.A. '00/A) at (757) 376-7456 or [teammckinney@msn.com](mailto:teammckinney@msn.com), or **Alfye Ingram** (B.S. '89/H&S) at (757) 485-5936 or [alfye387@verizon.net](mailto:alfye387@verizon.net).

### Council promotes events for young alumni

Alumni ages 35 and younger are invited to join the Young Alumni Council. During the 2009-10 academic year, the council will be hosting several events and involvement opportunities for young alumni, including:

- A pre-basketball game social
- Community-service projects, including volunteering at the SunTrust Marathon and the Ukrop’s Monument Avenue IOK
- Wine tasting/cooking class
- Chill and Grill during Homecoming
- Career services programs
- A social and group attendance at a spring Theatre VCU production

If you’d like to receive notices of council meetings and events, call (804) 828-ALUM (828-2586) or write to [VCU-ALUM@vcu.edu](mailto:VCU-ALUM@vcu.edu).

### Mass Comm alumni enjoy networking event

More than 75 graduates and professors of the School of Mass Communications attended a networking social May 7 at Burford Advertising headquarters in Richmond, Va.

**Doug Burford** (B.S. '65/MC), who has won the Ad Man of the Year award and is an author and philanthropist, and his family and staff at Burford Advertising hosted the event.

Alumni from the classes of 1965 through 2009 caught up with friends and colleagues.

“A lot of our alumni were wondering if there was a way through the school to connect with other alumni, regardless of graduating year,” says Michael Hughes, assistant director of development for the school. He hopes to make the socials a regular occurrence. To receive information on upcoming events, contact Hughes at (804) 827-3761 or [mehughes@vcu.edu](mailto:mehughes@vcu.edu).

### VCU Business Society honors retiring dean

School of Business alumni surprised retiring Dean Michael Sesnowitz, Ph.D., by making him an honorary member of the VCU Business Society, the business alumni organization, and naming him *Alumnus of the Year*.

Society board President **Steven B. Brincefield** (M.S. '74/B) presented the award in April as part of the annual Business Honors Ceremony.

Sesnowitz plans to return to the classroom in the fall of 2010. During his nine-year tenure as dean, he contributed vision and fundraising efforts for the Monroe Park Campus Addition, featuring a new facility for the School of Business. He also helped create the School of Business Foundation and led the school through a successful reaccreditation visit.

### Ceremony honors board-certified teachers

The VCU School of Education honored 43 Richmond-area teachers who achieved certification from the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards in 2008.

The teachers from the city of Richmond and Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico counties received pins from their local school superintendents to recognize the culmination of their yearlong certification process.

National Board Certification is a voluntary professional-development process that recognizes accomplished teachers who meet rigorous standards of performance. The pinning ceremony takes place each January and is sponsored by the Metropolitan Educational Training Alliance, a partnership of Richmond-area schools and the VCU School of Education.



# Update your record and share the news

[www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org)

**Save time! Visit the VCUEA Web site to update your contact, employment and personal information.**

## ABOUT YOU

Name ..... Class year .....

Maiden name (if applicable) .....

Street address .....

City ..... State ..... ZIP .....

Home phone ..... Cell phone .....

Home e-mail address .....

## EMPLOYMENT

Company ..... Job title .....

Start date ..... Retirement date (if applicable) .....

Street address .....

City ..... State ..... ZIP .....

Work phone .....

Work e-mail address .....

## MARRIAGE

Spouse's name .....

If VCU alumnus/alumna, class year .....

Wedding date ..... Spouse's employer .....

## FAMILY

☐ Boy ☐ Girl

Name ..... Date of birth/arrival .....

Spouse/partner's name .....

If VCU alumnus/alumna, class year .....

## REGISTER ONLINE

Get access to additional alumni-only features by registering online. It's fast. It's easy. It's free.

Visit [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org) and click on "Register." Once your registration is verified, you can:

- Access the alumni directory
- Start a CareerBeam account (complimentary until June 2010)
- Update your profile

Plus, we'll keep you informed via our monthly alumni e-newsletter.

## NEWS

(Use additional sheets if needed.)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- ☐ Please publish this information in Shafer Court Connections.
- ☐ Do not publish this information. I am submitting for record purposes only.

**To report a death,** please also provide a news clipping of the death notice.

Name of deceased ..... Class year .....

Date of death ..... Relationship to deceased .....

**Please note:** News for publication must be no more than 1 year old because of space constraints. If you do not wish to publish this information, please check the box at right.

**Mail your update to:** Office of Alumni Relations, Virginia Commonwealth University, 924 W. Franklin St., P.O. Box 843044, Richmond, VA 23284-3044; or fax (804) 828-8197; or e-mail [vcu-alum@vcu.edu](mailto:vcu-alum@vcu.edu); or visit [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org).



# Class notes

Send information about your professional and personal accomplishments to [shafercourt@vcu.edu](mailto:shafercourt@vcu.edu). Or, mail your news to Shafer Court Connections, Virginia Commonwealth University, 924 W. Franklin St., P.O. Box 843044, Richmond, VA 23284-3044.

## Updates

### 1950s

**Charles A. Peachee Jr.\*** (M.S. '52/H&S) retired after serving as a clinical psychologist for 55 years. He was a charter member of the Virginia Academy of Clinical Psychologists and the Richmond Academy of Clinical Psychologists, as well as, with his wife, **Nancy** (M.S. '54/H&S), a founding member of the Virginia Psychological Association.

### 1960s

**John Jay Schwartz\*** (B.S. '69/B), managing director of commercial real estate consulting and brokerage firm Have Site Will Travel, was elected chairman of the Henrico County Board of Real Estate Review and Equalization for 2009.

### 1970s

**Leah Bush, M.D.\*** (M.S. '79/H&S; M.D. '84/M) chief medical examiner for the commonwealth of Virginia, is the chair of the Department of Legal Medicine in the VCU School of Medicine.

**Sherran Deems** (B.F.A. '72/A; M.F.A. '93/A) teaches courses in the drawing minor at the Savannah College of Art and Design.

**Patricia Green\*** (M.S.W. '74/SW), founder and chief strategist of I C Linkages, was selected to join the Leadership America class of 2009, one of the longest-running national women's leadership programs in the world.

**Nick Poullos** (M.A. '79/B), vice president for patient access for Elan Pharmaceuticals, is the creator of the Ultimate Patient Access function.

**Kenny Sink** (B.F.A. '76/A) owns KreativeDept, a Studley, Va.-based advertising firm. Two of his recent poster campaigns for Studley Store have received recognition in two international graphic arts annuals—the 38th Creativity Annual Awards and the 2009 Graphis Poster Annual.

### 1980s

**Col. Rudy Burwell** (B.S. '86/MC) served as the chief of media operations for Multi-National Corps-Iraq and was selected for promotion to colonel in the U.S. Army. Following his assignment in Iraq, he returned to Washington, D.C., in July 2008 to work at the Pentagon as the chief of planning support for Army Public Affairs.

**Tammy H. Cummings** (B.S. '85/MC) was promoted to senior vice president and chief human resources officer of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond. She is responsible for the bank's regional human resources operations, policies and initiatives.

**Anthony Deldonna** (B.M. '80/A) is on the musicology faculty at Georgetown University, where he specializes in 18th-century Italian music, with an emphasis on opera.

**Kirk Laughlin** (B.S. '87/MC) launched Next Coast Media, a media consultancy business, in September 2008. He consults with technology marketers, business-to-business media brands and marketing agencies.

**J. Mark O'Shea** (M.S.W. '86/SW) is a clinical social worker in private practice in Chesterfield, Va., and was elected as a distinguished-practitioner member of the National Academies of Practice. The NAP comprises distinguished practitioners and scholars from all of the primary health professions and only 150 individuals can be elected to membership.

## Spotlight

### Second career addresses language barriers in health care

At age 50, after owning a couple of hair salons and raising three children with a husband she describes as “perfect,” **Vilma Seymour** (B.A. '07/H&S) decided to fulfill a lifelong dream of obtaining a college degree.

“When I told my family I was going back to school I made an announcement over dinner and they asked me to please not be the geek in the front row saying ‘I know the answer,’ and that’s exactly what I did,” she says. “I had a real motivation, I knew what I wanted to do and I was focused on my goals.”

Seymour, a longtime volunteer in the Latino community, is putting her Spanish degree and her desire to help others to work at the VCU Medical Center’s Office of Language Services. There, she helps eliminate communication barriers for patients and families with limited English proficiency, as well as oversees communication devices and interpreters for hearing-impaired patients, families and surrogate decision-makers. In addition, all bilingual staff or volunteer interpreters providing services to the medical center are required to attend one of the two on-site competency trainings she offers throughout the year.

Seymour knows firsthand the need for the services she provides patients. When her mother from Puerto Rico fell ill with congestive heart failure, Seymour served as her interpreter. Seymour says she didn’t even know how to say “congestive heart failure” when her mom passed away of the disease 17 years ago. Today, she hopes to help others experiencing the same situation.

“I am doing it in my mother’s memory. She’s really my guiding light, daily,” Seymour says. “I’m very proud that VCU Medical Center recognizes the importance of having this service and training for anybody who comes in and interprets for our patients and providers.”

Martha Gomez (back, third from left), Gov. Timothy M. Kaine and Vilma Seymour visit with fifth- and sixth-graders during a pilot Multicultural Summer Enrichment Camp that Seymour developed.



Photo: Michael White



## Recently published alumni and faculty members



**Cliff Edwards, Ph.D.**, professor of religious studies, wrote "Mystery of The Night Café," a new book on the spirituality of Vincent Van Gogh.

**Ronnie Greene's\*** (B.S. '86/MC) nonfiction environmental justice narrative, "Night Fire: Big Oil, Poison Air, and Margie Richard's Flight to Save Her Town," was one of three finalists for the Harry Chapin Media Award.

**Edward G. Kardos**, director of development for the VCU School of Dentistry, has authored his second book, a collection of short stories. "Zen Master Next Door," published by Humanics Publishing Group, comprises "17 parables for enlightened everyday living." The book also discusses the importance of maintaining a balance in all aspects of life — mental, physical and spiritual.

**Sara E. Lewis (M.A. '82/A)** released "James City County," the newest addition in Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series. The book explores America's first county through 200 vintage images.

**Steve Mickle (B.F.A. '71/A)** and his wife, Kyle Edgell, a caricaturist, published "Die Laughing!" which provides humorous healing through a lighthearted view of a grave situation. The book was endorsed by famed physician Patch Adams, M.D.

**Charles N. Smith, Ph.D.,\*** (B.S. '77/H&S; M.S. '81/AHP) released his latest political work, "The Last Shall Be the First," in 2008. The book focused on why then-Sen. Barack Obama could and would be the next president of the U.S.

**Cameron Stiles (B.F.A. '81/A)** was inducted into the American Society of Interior Designers College of Fellows at its 2008 annual conference. Fellowship is the highest national honor available to ASID members.

### 1990s

**Stephen J. Beckett (B.S. '94/H&S; M.T. '96/E)** received an \$11,000 grant from the R.E.B. Awards for Teaching Excellence to travel to Antarctica to learn about its influence on the rest of the Earth and its inhabitants.

**Héloïse B. "Ginger" Levit\*** (M.A. '98/A) was named to the list of Influential Women of Virginia 2009, sponsored by Virginia Lawyers Weekly. Levit is an art dealer and historian at atelier, a private art gallery open to corporate and private collectors, interior designers, museum professionals and art dealers.

**Sophia L. Minor (B.F.A. '97/A)** of Roanoke, Va., is the first titleholder from Virginia to win the national American Elegance pageant. The pageant celebrates women of all ages, and delegates forgo the traditional swimsuit competition for a personal expression segment where they bring awareness to a subject of their choosing. Minor addressed the stereotypical images of beauty in America.

**Keith Parker (B.A. '90/H&S; M.U.R.P. '93/H&S)** was recently hired as the president and CEO of VIA Metropolitan Transit in San Antonio. He was previously chief executive of the transit authority in Charlotte, N.C.

**Mary E. Perkinson (B.F.A. '91/A; B.S. '03/En)** received the Distinguished New Engineer Award from the Society of Women Engineers. The award honors women engineers who have been actively engaged in engineering in the first 10 years of their careers. Perkinson, an engineer with Northrop Grumman in Newport News, Va., received her company's Model of Excellence Award in 2004 for her work in helping improve retention and provide a more supportive environment for entry-level employees.

**David G. Russell (B.M. '90/A)** continues his career as a film scorer and composer in Hollywood. His most recent accomplishment was providing music for "Farrah's Story," which premiered on NBC on May 15, 2009, and chronicles Farrah Fawcett's 2 1/2 year fight against cancer.

**Melissa Wood (B.S. '97/MC)** is vice president for communication and marketing for SOLUS-Solutions

and Technologies, which was selected as one of 20 semifinalists in the Forbes.com Boost Your Business competition.

### 2000s

**Carolyn Belefski (B.F.A. '04/A)** and **Joe Carebeo (B.F.A. '05/A)** operate Curls Studio, where they produce a weekly comic strip called "Curls" and wrote and illustrated comic books "Kid Roxy" and "Black Magic Tales."

**Lisa Boyette Braswell (B.S. '02/En)** is employed as an IRTA fellow with the National Institutes of Health.

**Jared Broussard (B.M. '08/A)** is enrolled in the Master of Music program in trumpet performance at the University of Texas at Austin.

**Sarah Bushey (B.M. '07/A)** finished her master's degree at the University of Florida and began a doctoral program in musicology in fall 2009.

**Adam Butalewicz (B.M. '07/A)** finished his master's degree and began pursuing his D.M.A. at College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati in fall 2009.

**Joe Grant III (M.F.A. '06/A)** is head of the Glass Program in the 3-D Area of Studies in the School of the Arts at Illinois State University, Bloomington/Normal.

**Virginia Griswold (B.F.A. '04/A)** was accepted to Alfred University's M.F.A. program with a full scholarship.

**John Hartmann (B.M. '00/A)** is the director of marketing and external relations for the VCU Department of Music. His responsibilities include promoting VCU Music, overseeing the Web site, managing the box office and maintaining and pursuing relationships with alumni and friends.

**Ryan Hereth (B.F.A. '07/A)** has been a resident at Cub Creek Foundation, a nonstock Virginia corporation dedicated to the advancement of ceramic arts. Hereth exhibited his work, along with the other residents, at the Heart of Virginia Festival in Farmville, Va., on May 2, 2009.

**Sarah Holden (B.F.A. '08/A)** had work in her first international exhibit and is eligible for three different awards at the Port Moody Art Awards in Port Moody, British Columbia. She also had work in the "Fibers Expanded" exhibit at the Luke and Eloy Gallery in Pittsburgh, Pa.

**Katie Hudnall (M.F.A. '05/A)** received the first University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Art's Wood/Furniture Area Resident Artist Program award for \$15,000.

**Eric Jacobs (B.M. '07/A)** completed his master's degree at Rice University and began pursuing his D.M.A. at the University of California in fall 2009.

**Kathleen Kennedy (B.F.A. '08/A)** is working as a studio assistant for two artists, Nancy Worden and Gina Pankowski, in Seattle.

**Allyson Keyser (B.M. '06/A)** is pursuing a D.M.A. at the University of North Carolina-Greenville and placed in the semifinals at the National Trumpet Competition.

**Heath Matysek-Snyder (B.F.A. '00/A)** is enrolled in a one-year residency at Designated Objects Tasmania in Hobart, Australia. He was in a juried exhibit, "Tasmanian Wood Design Collection Biennial Acquisitive Exhibition," which opened in Hobart and moved to Launceston. Matysek-Snyder has also been a visiting artist at the University of Tasmania's Art School in the Furniture Design Department and proposed and was selected for a public art commission in Tasmania for the new pediatrics wing of the Royal Hobart Hospital.

**Matt McCutchen (M.M. '00/A)** earned his Ph.D. in music education from Florida State University.

**John Mlynczak (B.M. '05/A)** is living in Baton Rouge, La., and works as a teacher and freelance trumpeter in southern Louisiana, regularly subbing with the Louisiana Philharmonic in New Orleans, the Baton Rouge Symphony and various show orchestras.

**Ravi Naalla (M.S. '05/En)** is an SAS programmer for biostatistics and clinical management with Cubist Pharmaceuticals in Lexington, Mass. He and his colleagues on the Ecallantide Clinical Team were named Team of the Year at the company's annual awards ceremony.

**Lizzie Perkins (M.F.A. '04/A)** had her work "Ida" chosen for the BIGG: Breakthrough Ideas in Global Glass exhibit sponsored by Steuben Glass at the OSU Urban Arts Space and Hawk Galleries in Columbus, Ohio.

**Richard Knox Robinson's (M.F.A. '08/A)** short film, "The Beekeepers," was screened at the 2009 Sundance Festival. He is an award-winning photographer based near Charlottesville, Va., and his still photography has appeared in publications such as Smithsonian, National Geographic Traveler, Time and The Washington Post Magazine.

**Jodi-Ann Russell (B.M. '07/A)** was awarded a piano faculty appointment at Richmond Music Education Center in Glen Allen, Va.

**Kimberly Ryan (B.M. '05/A)** is attending the Cleveland Institute of Music as a Master of Music student in viola performance.

**Ryan Schell (B.A. '07/A)** was appointed as assistant to the executive director of the American Bach Soloists in San Francisco, Calif.

**Nanda Soderberg (M.F.A. '07/A)** worked at the Pilchuck Glass School in Washington as a gaffer for Whitfield Lovell and Elizabeth Turk during the summer.

**Jay Sykes (B.M. '01/A)** received the Goochland Middle School Teacher of the Year award from Goochland County Public Schools in Virginia.

**Elizabeth Talbot (B.F.A. '06/A)** received her M.F.A. from the University of Connecticut in May 2009 and was one of five graduate students to show their work in "The 2009 Master of Fine Arts Exhibition" at the William Benton Museum of Art at the university.

**Travis Townsend (M.F.A. '00/A)** was featured in "Penland: Great Teachers, Great Artists" at Habatat Galleries in Tysons Corner, Va., from April 28-July 17, 2009, and will be included in the Cedarhurst Wood Project at the Cedarhurst Center for the Arts in Mt. Vernon, Ill., and the "Transformations" Raphael Prize show at Pittsburgh's Society for Contemporary Craft. Townsend was also awarded the Virginia A. Groot Foundation grant and was published in Lark Books' "500 Tables."

**Adam Welch (M.F.A. '03/A)** has works featured in the new Lark Books publication "500 Ceramic Sculptures."



**Katie Whelan** (B.S. '06/H&S) is a volunteer for Friends of the Orphans, Mid-Atlantic/Northeast Region. She recently left for a year of service in Honduras at one of the charity's nine orphanages in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**LaTonya Whitaker** (B.S. '05/MC) received the Rising Star Award from the Virginia Chapter of the Society for Marketing Professional Services. The award is given to a marketing professional with fewer than five years' experience who has a demonstrated commitment to the field and industry and has shown an aptitude for leadership through intense involvement and contributions.

**Kathleen Winters** (B.M. '08/A) began a master's degree program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee this fall.

**Conschetta Wright** (B.S. '07/N; M.P.H. '09/M) received a Critical Language Scholarship to study Arabic in an eight-week immersion program in Tunisia. Wright recently graduated with a master's degree in public health and plans to use the experience to help offer culturally competent care to patients who speak Arabic.

## Faculty and staff

**Sonya Clark**, chair of the Department of Craft and Material Studies, had work included in the "Uber Portrait" exhibit at the Bellevue Arts Museum in Bellevue, Wash.; the Illinois exhibit at McLean County Arts Center in Bloomington, Ill.; the Katonah Museum of Art in Katonah, N.Y., as part of the exhibit "Dress Codes: Clothing as Sculpture," curated by Barbara Bloemink; the group exhibit "Hair on Fire" at the Halsey Institute at the College of Charleston in South Carolina; and the Architecture and Design Museum of Los Angeles exhibit "Upcycling: reclaiming past lives."

**Susie Ganch**, assistant professor in the Department of Craft and Material Studies, participated in "RE/ACTION(S)" at Craft Alliance, a group show in St. Louis, curated by Gail M. Brown.

**Bryan Hooten** (M.M. '06/A), adjunct professor of jazz and music theory, recently released his CD, "Framing the Void," by his quartet, Ombak, which features VCU faculty member **Brian Jones** on drums, VCU alumnus **Trey Pollard** (B.M. '05/A) on guitar and former VCU student **Cameron Ralston** on bass.

**Adam Larrabee** (M.M. '98/A), guitar instructor in the Department of Music, is featured on Eric Satie's new recording "House with Four Chimneys."

**Tony Martucci**, professor of jazz drums in the VCU Department of Music, released a new CD titled "Long Street Charm."

**William R. Muth**, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning, was granted a \$3,000 Research Initiation Award from the VCU School of Education. Since receiving the award in 2007, Muth has systematically studied a summer program sponsored by Hope House that works to strengthen relational bonds between children and their imprisoned fathers.

**Allan Rosenbaum** (M.F.A. '86/A) and **Lydia Thompson**, professors in the School of the Arts, have works featured in the new Lark Books publication "500 Ceramic Sculptures."

**James Smith-Parham**, voice instructor and vocal coach with the Department of Music, served as stage director for the Operafestival di Roma's production of "Suor Angelica" for his third season with the company.

**Charles West**, coordinator of winds and percussion for the Department of Music, gave master classes at the National Conservatory of Peru this past summer.

**Kenneth Wood**, assistant professor of voice with the Department of Music, sang the roles of Don Basilio and Don Curzio in "The Marriage of Figaro" at the Operafestival di Roma and served as co-director of the opera scenes program.

## In memoriam

### 1940s

**Jeanne E. Guza** (48/B), of Richmond, Va., March 24, 2009, at age 81.

**Maxine R. Lakin** (B.S. '42/E), of Sparta, Va., June 14, 2009.

**Nancy B. Leaghty** (B.S. '49/B), of Midlothian, Va., March 8, 2009.

### 1950s

**June F. Bass\*** (B.F.A. '53/A), of Richmond, Va., Feb. 17, 2009, at age 77.

**Thomas E. Belvin** (Cert. '51/A), of Williamsburg, Va., Jan. 7, 2009, at age 85.

**Owen L. Burks** (B.S. '58/E), of Roanoke, Va., Feb. 29, 2008, at age 73.

**Wamer J. Callahan Jr.** (B.F.A. '51/A; M.S. '52/A), of Colonial Heights, Va., March 5, 2009.

**Heath C. Clarke Jr.** (Cert. '56/B), of Richmond, Va., June 3, 2009, at age 78.

**Donald G. Cronan** (Cert. '51/A), of Oswego, N.Y., Jan. 11, 2009, at age 84.

**Harper S. Darden** (Cert. '51/A; B.M. '53/A), of Glen Allen, Va., April 12, 2009, at age 82.

**William P. Dulaney** (B.S. '56/B), of Glen Allen, Va., April 21, 2009.

**Anne T. Foster** (B.S. '57/H&S; M.Ed. '74/E), of Richmond, Va., April 4, 2009, at age 93.

**Louis V. Gordon Jr.** (B.S. '52/B), of Powhatan, Va., Feb. 23, 2009, at age 82.

**James R. Grubbs Jr.** (B.S. '58/H&S), of Richmond, Va., April 12, 2009, at age 76.

**Aubrey L. Lucas** (B.S. '51/B; M.S. '66/B), of Colonial Heights, Va., Jan. 11, 2009, at age 82.

**Edythe D. Owen\*** (B.F.A. '50/A), of Virginia Beach, Va., March 9, 2009, at age 80.

**Howard B. Padgett** (B.S. '50/B), of Rockville, Va., March 3, 2009, at age 83.

**Donald H. Snodgrass** (B.S. '59/E), of Fuquay-Varina, N.C., Feb. 4, 2009, at age 76.

### 1960s

**Lawrence L. Blake** (B.S. '67/B), of Prince George, Va., March 28, 2009, at age 65.

**Dorothy B. Carneal** (B.F.A. '60/A), of Sandston, Va., May 31, 2009, at age 71.

**Lucius T. Chapin** (A.S. '68/En), of Richmond, Va., April 14, 2009, at age 64.

**Laura E. Crabtree** (A.A. '66/H&S), of Sandston, Va., June 4, 2009, at age 65.

**Ann S. Garnett** (B.S. '61/H&S), of Fredericksburg, Va., June 13, 2009, at age 66.

**Donald T. Harris** (B.S. '62/B), of Charlotte, N.C., Feb. 7, 2008.

**Barry L. Jones** (B.S. '69/B), of Bradenton, Fla., March 3, 2009, at age 63.

**Elwood C. Kelley** (B.S. '60/H&S), of Rockville, Va., March 8, 2009, at age 69.

**Judith H. Long** (B.S. '66/E), of Virginia Beach, Va., April 20, 2009.

**Diane C.D. McClaugherty\*** (B.F.A. '62/A), of Great Falls, Va., Jan. 28, 2009.

**Barbara H. McDaniel\*** (B.S. '68/B), of Punta Gorda, Fla., Jan. 9, 2009, at age 65.

**Marian M. McDonald** (B.S. '65/H&S; M.S.W. '67/SW), of Annapolis, Md., Nov. 11, 2008, at age 81.

**Richard G. Orander** (B.S. '68/B), of Raleigh, N.C., March 24, 2009, at age 74.

**Dale E. Roe** (B.S. '69/E), of Poquoson, Va., Feb. 22, 2009, at age 62.

## Spotlight

### Alumna hits career high note

As a teenager who loved to sing, **Eva Dillon** (B.A. '82/A) envisioned turning her talent into a career and in 1976 enrolled in Virginia Commonwealth University to pursue a degree in music.

The first job she landed out of college, however, was in advertising. She quickly found that the other skills she had learned at VCU – collaboration and leadership, for example – were just as important and applicable.

"I believe you can learn valuable skills of many sorts in school and apply them to any variety of professions," Dillon says.

Dillon made a name for herself in the publishing world, working as vice president and publisher of *Jane* magazine and then serving as the launch publisher of *Cookie* and positioning it as the first family lifestyle magazine to bridge luxury and mass advertising. In 2002, *Advertising Age* named Dillon a "Woman to Watch."

In March 2007, Dillon joined *Reader's Digest* as president and group publisher. This year, much of her focus centered on finding strategies to keep the magazine fresh and relevant, which, she says, has been rewarding.

All the hard work seems to be paying off. *Reader's Digest* won the National Magazine Award for general excellence in April, beating *Martha Stewart Living*, *Real Simple*, *National Geographic* and *Time*.

"In the magazine world, it's like getting the Oscar for Best Picture," Dillon says.

Dillon lives in New York with her husband, James, but visits Richmond and the VCU campus frequently. Many of her six siblings live in the area and four are VCU alumni.

"I always reflect on how much the surroundings have changed and how much they've stayed the same and how the experiences I had shaped my life, which turned out great," she says. "Thanks, VCU!"

Eva Dillon (second from right) chats with her team at *Reader's Digest* (from left) Melissa Morales, Heddy Pierson and Nick Cook.



Photo Elizabeth Leonard

# Alumni association

## Officers

Donna M. Dalton (M.Ed. '00/E), president  
Kenneth A. Thomas (B.S. '91/B), president-elect  
Mary E. Perkinson (B.F.A. '91/A; B.S. '03/En),  
treasurer  
Thomas H. Beatty (B.A. '93/H&S), secretary  
Paul D. McWhinney (B.S. '74/SW; M.S.W. '79/SW),  
officer at large  
C. Dandridge Massey (B.S. '92/B), immediate  
past president

## Directors

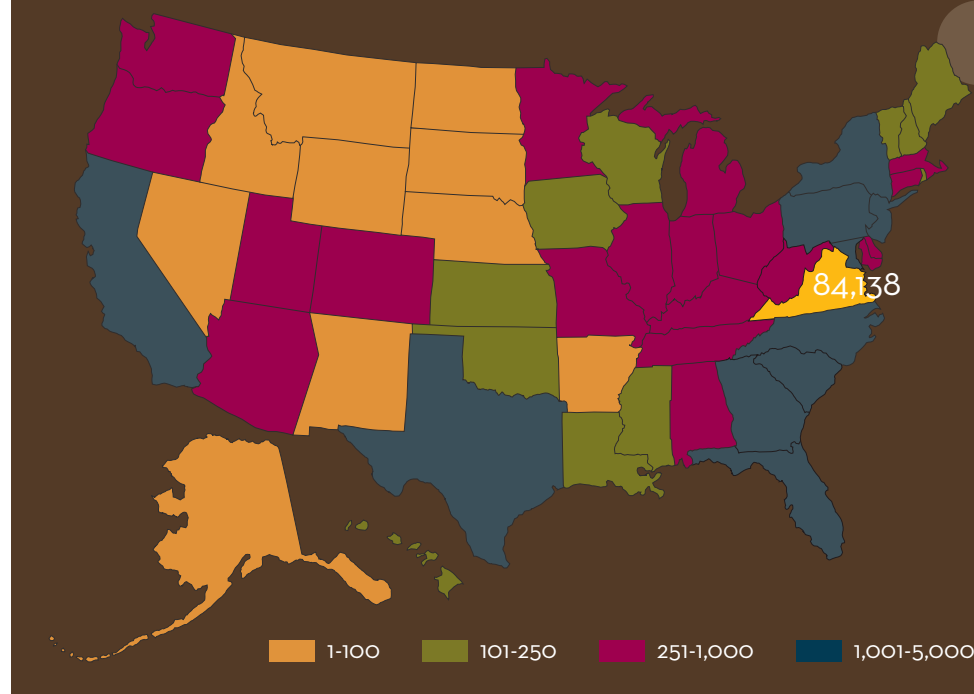
Mary H. Allen (B.S. '80/E)  
Robert A. Almond (B.S. '74/E; M.S. '85/E)  
(presidential appointment)  
Peter A. Blake (B.A. '80/H&S; M.S. '88/MC)  
Elizabeth W. Bryant (B.S. '84/MC; M.S. '04/MC)  
Leah L.E. Bush, M.D. (M.S. '79/H&S; M.D. '84/M)  
Julia M. Cain (B.S. '01/En)  
(presidential appointment)  
Rejena G. Carreras (B.F.A. '70/A; M.A.E. '80/A)  
William L. Davis (B.S. '74/H&S; M.S. '79/H&S)  
David R. Dennier (B.S. '75/B)  
Gregory B. Fairchild (B.S. '88/MC)  
Aaron R. Gilchrist Jr. (B.S. '03/MC)  
Stephanie L. Holt (B.S. '74/E)  
Raymond E. Honeycutt (B.S. '76/E)  
(presidential appointment)  
Christopher R. Jones (B.S. '01/En)  
Stephen H. Jones (B.S. '75/B)  
Shirley R. McDaniel (B.G.S. '99/H&S)  
Elizabeth J. Moran (M.P.A. '92/H&S)  
John S. Philips (M.S. '78/B)  
John Jay Schwartz (B.S. '69/B)  
Vickie M. Snead (B.S. '76/B)  
Jacqueline Tunstall-Bynum (B.S. '82/H&S)  
Natalee A. Wasiluk (B.F.A. '86/A)  
James E. Williams (B.S. '84/H&S; M.S. '96/H&S)

## School and affiliated group representatives

Franklin R. Wallace (B.F.A. '87/A; M.P.A. '08/H&S),  
African-American Alumni Council  
Eugene H. Hunt (B.S. '59/B; M.S. '61/B),  
RPI Alumni Council  
Gaurav "G" Shrestha (B.S. '03/B), Young Alumni  
Council  
Joseph E. Becht Jr. (B.S. '80/B), School  
of Business  
Christopher R. Jones (B.S. '01/En), School  
of Engineering  
Dale C. Kalkofen (M.A.E. '76/A), School  
of Education  
Elizabeth M. McAdam (B.S. '05/H&S; M.S.W. '07/SW),  
School of Social Work

## Did you know?

More than 92 percent of VCU's 140,304 alumni live in the U.S. The majority of alumni reside in Virginia (84,138), North Carolina (4,695) and Maryland (3,501), with the fewest VCU graduates settling in North Dakota (13), South Dakota (28) and Wyoming (43).



Julian H. Sinault III (B.S. '60/E), of Richmond, Va.,  
April 30, 2009, at age 74.  
Alan R. Tye (B.S. '64/B), of Henrico, Va., Jan. 29, 2009,  
at age 75.  
Gerald Wilson (B.S. '69/H&S), of Newport News, Va.,  
Jan. 11, 2008, at age 64.

## 1970s

Danny L. Athans (B.S. '78/H&S), of Richmond, Va., Jan.  
23, 2009, at age 56.  
Raymond Elwood Beverley (B.S. '71/B), of Richmond,  
Va., March 21, 2009, at age 60.  
John B. Boatwright III (B.S. '78/H&S), of Richmond,  
Va., Feb. 9, 2009, at age 56.  
Early L. Bowden Jr. (B.S. '77/B), of Manakin-Sabot, Va.,  
Feb. 28, 2009, at age 63.  
Charles W. Clary (B.A. '79/H&S), of Lexington, Ky.,  
April 2, 2009, at age 54.  
Erman F. Clower (M.B.A. '76/B), of Sandston, Va., May  
8, 2009, at age 64.  
John H.N. Cockburn (B.S. '71/B), of Columbia, S.C.,  
March 21, 2009, at age 60.  
Jean P. Copeland (M.Ed. '70/E), of Chesterfield, Va.,  
May 12, 2009, at age 72.  
Theresa W. Davis (M.S.W. '75/SW), of Portsmouth, Va.,  
April 1, 2009, at age 58.  
George A. Freese Jr. (B.S. '73/B), of Hopewell, Va.,  
May 11, 2009, at age 74.  
Carol Grim (B.F.A. '73/A), of Richmond, Va., March 29,  
2009, at age 57.  
John H. Hardage (M.S. '72/B), of Raleigh, N.C., May  
18, 2009, at age 69.  
Mildred C. Helms (B.A. '60/E; M.Ed. '71/E), of Richmond,  
Va., April 25, 2009, at age 77.

Michael S. Huffman (B.F.A. '74/A), of Smithfield, Va.,  
Jan. 14, 2009, at age 62.  
George J. Kadzis, D.D.S. (B.S. '74/H&S; D.D.S. '78/D),  
of Tallahassee, Fla., March 2, 2009, at age 56.  
Alfred J. Marcussen ('72/H&S), of Richmond, Va.,  
March 20, 2009, at age 85.  
Anne Pitts McCabe (M.Ed. '71/E), of Richmond, Va.,  
Feb. 7, 2009.  
Amy N. McFall (B.F.A. '75/A), of Gloucester, Va., June  
8, 2009.  
Anne K. McKenney\* ('77/A), of Richmond, Va., March  
24, 2009, at age 53.  
Earl W. Moore (B.S. '75/B), of Richmond, Va., April 7,  
2009, at age 68.  
Patrick M. O'Hare\* (B.S. '70/H&S; M.S. '78/H&S), of  
Midlothian, Va., June 5, 2009, at age 73.  
Edgar P. Phillips Jr. (B.S. '74/MC), of Chesterfield, Va.,  
May 20, 2009, at age 66.  
Edna K. Spain (B.S. '77/B), of Merrells Inlet, S.C., May  
21, 2009, at age 62.

## 1980s

Richard S. Braxton (B.S. '81/B), of Richmond, Va., May  
28, 2009, at age 59.  
Kevin O. Ferguson (B.S. '84/E), of Chester, Va., Feb. 1,  
2009, at age 49.  
Roxanne Friend, Ph.D. (M.S. '89/H&S; Ph.D. '92/H&S),  
of Hope, R.I., May 22, 2009, at age 57.  
Richard R. Gallahan (B.S. '82/E), of Woodbridge,  
Conn., Jan. 30, 2009, at age 55.  
Edmund E. Hamilton (M.P.A. '80/H&S), of Richmond,  
Va., Jan. 17, 2009, at age 75.  
Constance M. Hill (B.S. '82/H&S), of Lightfoot, Va.,  
March 8, 2009, at age 52.



**Barbara M. Huxter** (B.G.S. '84/H&S), of Palm Bay, Fla., March 3, 2009, at age 79.

**Elizabeth S. Johnson** (B.A. '81/H&S), of Richmond, Va., Feb. 22, 2009, at age 90.

**Rosemary H. Kelso** (B.S. '80/B; M.S.W. '90/SW), of Richmond, Va., May 11, 2009, at age 54.

**Kimberly A. Montgomery** (B.S. '84/H&S), of Lynchburg, Va., Jan. 20, 2009, at age 47.

**Mike Schlegel** ('85), a former center on VCU basketball teams, died at age 45. Schlegel scored 1,173 points during four seasons as a Rams starter, making him one of three 1,000-point scorers in his class.

**Ava M. Thomas** (M.P.A. '82/H&S), of Richmond, Va., May 8, 2009, at age 53.

**Linwood E. Wingfield Jr.** (B.S. '89/B), of Richmond, Va., March 14, 2009, at age 43.

**Richard W. Wright** (B.S. '87/MC), of Seattle, Wash., Feb. 19, 2009, at age 45.

**Robert F. Zahradnick** (M.S. '82/H&S), of Sandston, Va., April 15, 2009, at age 75.

## 1990s

**Anthony D. Benedict** (B.F.A. '94/A), of Manassas, Va., Feb. 23, 2009, at age 38.

**David Blood** (B.S. '98/B), of Lansdowne, Pa., June 4, 2009, at age 39.

**Troy E. Clark** (B.S. '93/B), of Tampa, Fla., Jan. 17, 2009, at age 37.

**Hester L. Dorer, Ph.D.\*** (M.S. '98/H&S; Ph.D. '01/H&S), of Richmond, Va., Feb. 10, 2009, at age 54.

**Pat Garrison Dungan\*** (B.F.A. '95/A), of Suffolk, Va., Feb. 9, 2009, at age 56.

**Nancy L. Farmer-Hoisington** (M.S.W. '96/SW), of Alexandria, Va., March 7, 2009, at age 58.

**George M. Hall** (B.S. '90/B), of St. Augustine, Fla., March 15, 2009, at age 52.

**Jarrel E. Hanson** (B.S. '93/B), of Virginia Beach, Va., May 28, 2009, at age 45.

**Kristie M. Kemerer** (B.S. '94/E), of Arnold, Md., May 27, 2009, at age 38.

**Charline Oliff** (M.Ed. '97/E), of Palmyra, Va., Feb. 24, 2009, at age 58.

## 2000s

**Austin M. Adams** (B.S. '03/H&S), of Richmond, Va., May 18, 2008, at age 32.

**Lynn B. Barco** (B.A. '01/H&S), of Richmond, Va., May 27, 2009, at age 46.

**John H. Grassmick** (B.F.A. '00/A), of Luray, Va., Dec. 17, 2008, at age 34.

**Keegan Francis Merrick** (B.S. '08/H&S), Jan. 22, 2009, at age 31. He served as an animal control officer for the city of Richmond and, in 2006, was named Officer of the Year by the Virginia Animal Control Association. He also helped to organize and spearhead the Virginia Animal Fighting Task Force.

**Michael Nadeau** (B.S. '00/En), of Kalamazoo, Mich., March 31, 2009, at age 40.

**Andrew C. Stevens** (B.A. '01/H&S), of Glen Allen, Va., Jan. 30, 2009, at age 31.

**Jacelle L. Winston** (Cert. '07/B), of Richmond, Va., March 23, 2009, at age 27.

## Faculty and staff

**Manley Elliot Banks II, Ph.D.**, associate professor of political science in VCU's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, died Aug. 21, 2009, at age 56. Banks joined VCU Jan. 1, 1987, and taught courses in city politics, U.S. government, voting rights issues and urban economic development policies and also served as an honor code coordinator for the College of Humanities and Sciences. He was a member of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists

and Minority Scholars Concerned About Voting Rights Issues. Banks received his undergraduate degree from Morehouse College in Atlanta and his master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Texas.

**Martha D. Berliner, Ph.D.**, of Virginia Beach, Va., died March 4, 2009, at age 80. She served as chair and professor in the Department of Biology and as professor of microbiology and immunology from 1982 until 1987. While at VCU, she co-founded a plant biotechnology laboratory.

**Thomas C. Campbell Jr., Ph.D.**, retired business professor, died July 8, 2009, at age 89. He taught economics at West Virginia University and served as dean of the Business and Economics School from 1961-1968 when The Ford Foundation asked him to go to Kenya to help the government write its first five-year economic plan. In 1980 he moved to Richmond and taught part time at VCU. Upon retiring, he did volunteer work at the Virginia Historical Society.

**Robert Dilworth, Ed.D.**, of Richmond, Va., died June 6, 2009, at age 72. Following a 31-year career in the U.S. Army, he joined the VCU School of Education, where he taught adult education and human resource development. He retired as associate professor emeritus in 2005. Over the years, he earned three master's degrees and a doctorate and became known internationally for his work with action learning.

**Clarence L. Dunn, Ph.D.**, of Richmond, Va., died Feb. 3, 2009, at age 86. He received three degrees from the University of Illinois in Urbana. He taught briefly at his alma mater, followed by 26 years as a professor at Louisiana State University, where he served as head of the accounting department, as associate dean of the College of Business Administration and as assistant vice chancellor of academic affairs. He retired from LSU in May 1978 and then taught at VCU for 10 years as professor of accounting before retiring in May 1987.

**Thomas O. Hall Jr., Th.D.**, VCU professor emeritus, died July 20, 2009, at age 85. He joined Richmond Professional Institute, the precursor to VCU, as an adjunct professor and developed a department of philosophy and religious studies, which he chaired for 17 years. Hall left the department to develop the university's honors program. He earned his Bachelor of Divinity, Master of Theology and Doctor of Theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. During his career, Hall received the Outstanding Faculty Award from the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia and the Distinguished Service Award from VCU. The College of Humanities and Sciences established the Thomas O. Hall Jr. Honors Scholarship Fund in his name.

**James T. Moore, Ph.D.**, emeritus professor of history, died April 1, 2009, at age 63. He joined the VCU Department of History as an instructor in 1970 and became its chair in 1981. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of South Carolina and his Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. While at VCU, he taught courses in U.S. history and received the College of Humanities and Sciences' Lecturer's Award and the college's Distinguished Teaching Award. He also wrote "Two Paths to the New South: The Virginia Debt Controversy, 1870-1883" and co-edited another book, "The Governors of Virginia, 1860-1978." The James Tice Moore Scholarship in History for Teachers was established in his honor in 2008.

**James A. Wood, Ph.D.**, of Richmond, Va., died March 14, 2009, at age 69. He was a graduate of Georgetown University and the University of Virginia, where he received a Ph.D. in mathematics. His 45-plus-year career included nearly 40 at VCU as professor of mathematics and director of graduate studies.

## Friends of VCU

**J.B. Bourne Jr.**, of Sandston, Va., April 30, 2009.

**Stuart G. Christian Jr.**, of Richmond, Va., Feb. 8, 2009.

**Leslie Grandis**, of Richmond, Va., March 30, 2009.

**Nancy C. Lesac**, of Richmond, Va., Jan. 19, 2009.

**Ernest E. Rosenthal**, of Richmond, Va., May 31, 2009.

# Spotlight

## Shafer Court sparks reunion

Instant chemistry sparked between **Keith Jenkins** (B.S. '80/B) and **Mabel Washington** (B.S. '81/B) when they met at Virginia Commonwealth University in 1978.

"I liked Keith from the moment I laid eyes on him," Washington says. "We never dated, but I always talked about this cute guy I had a 'crush' on."

At the time, Jenkins says, he thought of Washington as "just a freshman." The sophomore business major never really thought anything serious would develop with the young girl he regularly saw at the dining hall.

Jenkins remembers Valentine's Day 1978 fondly. Washington walked up to him and said, "It's Valentine's Day. Where is my chocolate?"

"I can't remember what I said to her, but I finally gave her chocolate in February 2007," Jenkins says.

When he graduated, the two went their separate ways. Jenkins pursued a career in sales, while Washington took a different path, in local government. The two thought they'd never see each other again, but neither forgot the other.

In 2004, Shafer Court Connections noted Washington's promotion to city council clerk in Newport News, Va. Jenkins, who was living in Virginia Beach, Va., at the time, saw her name and remembered the cute, dimple-cheeked girl from his college years. He decided to contact Washington, in hopes of reconnecting.

"We talked and communicated via e-mail on a daily basis. Our conversations confirmed that he was the guy for me," Washington says.

And 30 years after their first chance meeting on campus, the couple tied the knot Oct. 18, 2008.



Keith Jenkins and Mabel Washington celebrate their first anniversary this month.

## New lifetime members

William B. Adams, M.D.	Robert P. Malyska
Lara G. Addison	Percy M. Mansfield III
Ajay Adhikari, Ph.D.	Sarah Kelly Mansfield
John R. Alexander Jr.	James A. McDonough Jr.
Damon Allen	Morgan Elizabeth McDowell
Linda D. Brown-Burton	Cynthia H. McMullen
James O. Burgess	Laura Michaels
Mason L. Burnette	Stephen W. Michaels
Chris S. Canavos	Catherine L. Moore
Colleen W. Carney	Colleen A. Moore
Julie J. Carwile	Louis W. Moore
Ryan M. Castillo	William Brent Moore
James P. Charnley	Ralph D. Neal, Ph.D.
Peter Clancy	Denise M. Ortiz
Keefe R. Coble	Josephine B. Owusu-Sakyi
Donna E. Coghill	R.A. Pace Jr.
Felecia I Coleman	Joan M. Pellegrini, Ph.D.
Charles Conyers	MaryAnne Pennington
Joice E. Conyers	Vicki Phillos
W. Gray Corbett Jr.	Justin L. Poklis
Catherine C. Cottrell	Pamela H. Poole
Trina B. Davis	Kamesha L. Price
Patricia D. Dickinson	Mark A. Robbins
Stephen Y. Dickinson	Morris Roberson
Sharon Ann Dodson-Longest	Edwin S. Robertson
Tanisha S. Dorsey	Cynthia M. Rudell
Barbara S. Eadeh	John A. Sankey III
James C. Edwards	Patricia G. Sankey
Susan A. Edwards	James E. Schepmoes
Bonnie S. Eisenman	Thomas W. Schleicher
Donna D. Elder	Corinne Renee Shelton-Adams
Larry G. Elder, J.D.	Kristen L. Sheriff, D.P.T.
John C. Emory Jr.	Tara E. Silver-Malyska
Lea W. Emory	Robert A. Simms
Charles E. Faison Jr.	Cynthia A. Simpson
Stanley J. Feuer	Curtis A. Sisson
Judy M.K. Fitch	Elizabeth V. Sisson
Juliana R. Franklin	Lesley A. Smith
Leah A. Fremouw	Nathan A. Smith
Lynn L. Garmew	Robin N. Snaden
Richard H. Gibbs	Lawrence J. Spencer, Ph.D.
Kenneth C. Giles	William D. Spiller II
Betty Ann Lee Gillelan	Arnette A. Steele
Marion Gittings	Laura E. Stevenson
Beverly P. Glover	Patrick Swope
Bobby A. Gordon	Sarah Werner Swope
Janet L. Haase	Jessica B. Troutman
Randall Haase	Alison Ullman
Allison Aheart Haymore	Franklin R. Wallace Jr.
John H. Haynes	Natalee Wasiluk
Mary M. Hoffman	Geraldine B. Watkinson
Raymond E. Honeycutt	Ralph E. Watkinson
Anita L. Iyer	Robert S. Welch
Gloria J. Jackson	Kenneth W. Wester
Kathryn Briscoe Kelley	William B. Willaford IV
Brenda L. Kirk	Shirley B. Williams
Min J. Lee	Aaron L. Winer
Larry L. Longest	Marian F. Winer

List includes individuals who joined the VCU Alumni Association as lifetime members between Jan. 1, 2009, and June 30, 2009.

## Abbreviation key

Alumni are identified by degree, year and college or school. An asterisk (\*) identifies members of the VCU Alumni Association.

### College and schools

H&S	College of Humanities and Sciences
A	School of the Arts
AHP	School of Allied Health Professions
B	School of Business
D	School of Dentistry
E	School of Education
En	School of Engineering
GPA	L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs
GS	Graduate School
LS	VCU Life Sciences
M	School of Medicine
MC	School of Mass Communications
N	School of Nursing
P	School of Pharmacy
SW	School of Social Work
WS	School of World Studies

### Degrees

A.A., A.S.	Associate Degree
Cert.	Certificate
B.F.A.	Bachelor of Fine Arts
B.G.S.	Bachelor of General Studies
B.I.S.	Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies
B.M.	Bachelor of Music
B.M.E.	Bachelor of Music Education
B.S.	Bachelor of Science
B.S.W.	Bachelor of Social Work
D.D.S.	Doctor of Dental Surgery
D.N.A.P.	Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice
D.P.A.	Doctor of Public Administration
D.P.T.	Doctor of Physical Therapy
M.A.	Master of Arts
M.Acc.	Master of Accountancy
M.A.E.	Master of Art Education
M.B.A.	Master of Business Administration
M.Bin.	Master of Bioinformatics
M.D.	Doctor of Medicine
M.Ed.	Master of Education
M.Env.	Master of Environmental Studies
M.F.A.	Master of Fine Arts
M.H.A.	Master of Health Administration
M.I.S.	Master of Interdisciplinary Studies
M.M.	Master of Music
M.M.E.	Master of Music Education
M.P.A.	Master of Public Administration
M.P.H.	Master of Public Health
M.P.S.	Master of Pharmaceutical Sciences
M.S.	Master of Science
M.S.A.T.	Master of Science in Athletic Training
M.S.D.	Master of Science in Dentistry
M.S.H.A.	Master of Science in Health Administration
M.S.N.A.	Master of Science in Nurse Anesthesia
M.S.O.T.	Master of Science in Occupational Therapy
M.S.W.	Master of Social Work
M.T.	Master of Teaching
M.Tax.	Master of Taxation
M.U.R.P.	Master of Urban and Regional Planning
O.T.D.	Post-professional Occupational Therapy Doctorate
Pharm.D.	Doctor of Pharmacy
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy



# GREEK LIFE

## evolves along with university

By Kelli Anderson

Students looking to find their niche on campus have 33 fraternities and sororities providing leadership, community service and academic experiences to enhance their college career at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Greek life continues to grow alongside university enrollment as more and more students join the close-knit groups to find that home away from home, says Cara Jenkins, VCU fraternity and sorority life coordinator. Since 2005, 10 fraternities and sororities have joined the Greek life fold at VCU.

"In only three years, we've almost doubled the community," she says.

That's a far different student-life picture from when **Ron Gentry** (B.S. '70/MC) attended Richmond Professional Institute, now VCU.

"At that time the school didn't have a lot of organizations or functions that brought people together and this was a way to do that," says Gentry, who joined RPI's first unofficial fraternity, Phi Delta Omega, in 1966. Five years later, VCU recognized the local chapter when it affiliated with the international fraternity Sigma Phi Epsilon.

The first chartered Greek-letter organization, however, came to campus a year earlier, in 1970, with Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. Each chapter established in the nearly 40 years since has kept pace with VCU's student population, offering men and women of different cultural backgrounds, philanthropic interests and strong academic goals the chance to come together in brother- and sisterhood.

"Our chapters reflect the diversity of VCU's student population," Jenkins says.

Today, the reasons students "Go Greek" remain very similar to 19 years ago, says Lynne Chambers, the Alpha Sigma Alpha sorority adviser since 1990.

"Back then, women were looking for a small group to connect with and opportunities for leadership development," Chambers says. "Today, VCU is a big university with a lot more opportunities for clubs and groups. But women are still looking for a small, cohesive group as a support system."

Erin Halye, who is completing the graduate year of the five-year extended teacher preparation program, joined a sorority as a sophomore because she wanted to get involved. Halye — who commutes from Midlothian, Va. — found Phi Sigma Sigma offered her opportunities and a family environment at VCU.

"They showed me that being a sorority woman was a whole lot more and a whole lot better than I thought it would be," Halye says. "They do so much around campus and in the community."

Those events include an annual Rock-A-Thon to raise money for the Phi Sigma Sigma Foundation, which supports the National Kidney Foundation's U.S. Transplant Games and provides grants and scholarships for sisters as well as other philanthropic endeavors.

Halye jumped right into leadership roles by serving as her sorority's president, director of operations for the Panhellenic Council and now as president of the Greek honor organization, Order of Omega.

"I feel like I've gotten so much more out of my college experience with this," Halye says. "It's really helped me evolve as a leader and as a person."

The fraternity and sorority community not only positively impacts campus culture and student life but also has lasting effects on member development after graduation.

"It's not just something you do for four years," Jenkins says. "It's the idea of lifetime membership and friendship. The fundamental purpose of fraternities and sororities is to help make men and women better citizens."

Gentry agrees: "My brothers were my closest friends at school and still are today."

*Kelli Anderson is a contributing writer for Shafer Court Connections.*

### VCU Greek life turns 40

Celebrate 40 years of VCU's fraternity and sorority community throughout 2010. Greek alumni are invited to participate in the on-campus celebrations.

For more information, call (804) 828-4685 or visit [www.usca.vcu.edu/greeklife](http://www.usca.vcu.edu/greeklife).

**[then]** Phi Mu joined VCU's campus in 1988 and tailored to the college trends during that time.

**[now]** Today the Phi Mu bonds of friendship and sisterhood still remain.



# Datebook

Mark your calendars for these Virginia Commonwealth University and VCU Alumni Association events. For more alumni activities, go to [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org), [www.vcu-aaac.org](http://www.vcu-aaac.org) or visit <http://events.vcu.edu> for campus happenings.

## NOVEMBER

Nov. 4

**Book signing with Judith Fox, author of "I STILL Do: Loving and Living with Alzheimer's"**

Barnes & Noble @ VCU on the Monroe Park Campus  
(804) 828-1678

Nov. 5-22

**Theatre VCU – "Ain't Misbehavin'"**

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
(804) 828-6026

Nov. 17-20

**VCU Libraries: Centennial anniversary of the founding of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia**

Various events/locations  
(804) 828-1105



The Equal Suffrage League of Virginia

## DECEMBER

Dec. 12

**Winter Commencement**

Stuart C. Siegel Center  
(804) 828-1917

## JANUARY

Jan. 30

**Capuçon-Angelich Trio**

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
(804) 828-6776



Homecoming

## FEBRUARY

**Black History Month at VCU**

Various events/locations  
(804) 828-6672

Feb. 6

**Homecoming Weekend**

Various events/locations  
(804) 828-1981

RA Reunion\*

Location/date TBD

Chill and Grill\*

Location/date TBD

VCU Hoops\*

Location/date TBD

**VCUAA Board of Directors Meeting\***

Location TBD  
(804) 828-2586

Feb. 20

**Arnaldo Cohen, piano**

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
(804) 828-6776

Feb. 21-March 21

**Theatre VCU – "The Grapes of Wrath"**

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
(804) 828-6026

## MARCH

March 10

**The Richmond Piano Trio**

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
(804) 828-6776

March 25

**Browns-Lyons Lecture with Jack D. Spiro, Ph.D.**

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
(804) 828-1105

March 27

**Jupiter String Quartet**

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
(804) 828-6776



Jupiter String Quartet

## APRIL

**Alumni Month**

Details to follow in the spring magazine and at [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org).

April 8-25

**Theatre VCU – "The Who's Tommy"**

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
(804) 828-6026

April 10

**VCUAA Board of Directors Meeting\***

Location TBD  
(804) 828-2586

April 17

**Pieter Wispelwey, cello**

W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts  
(804) 828-6776

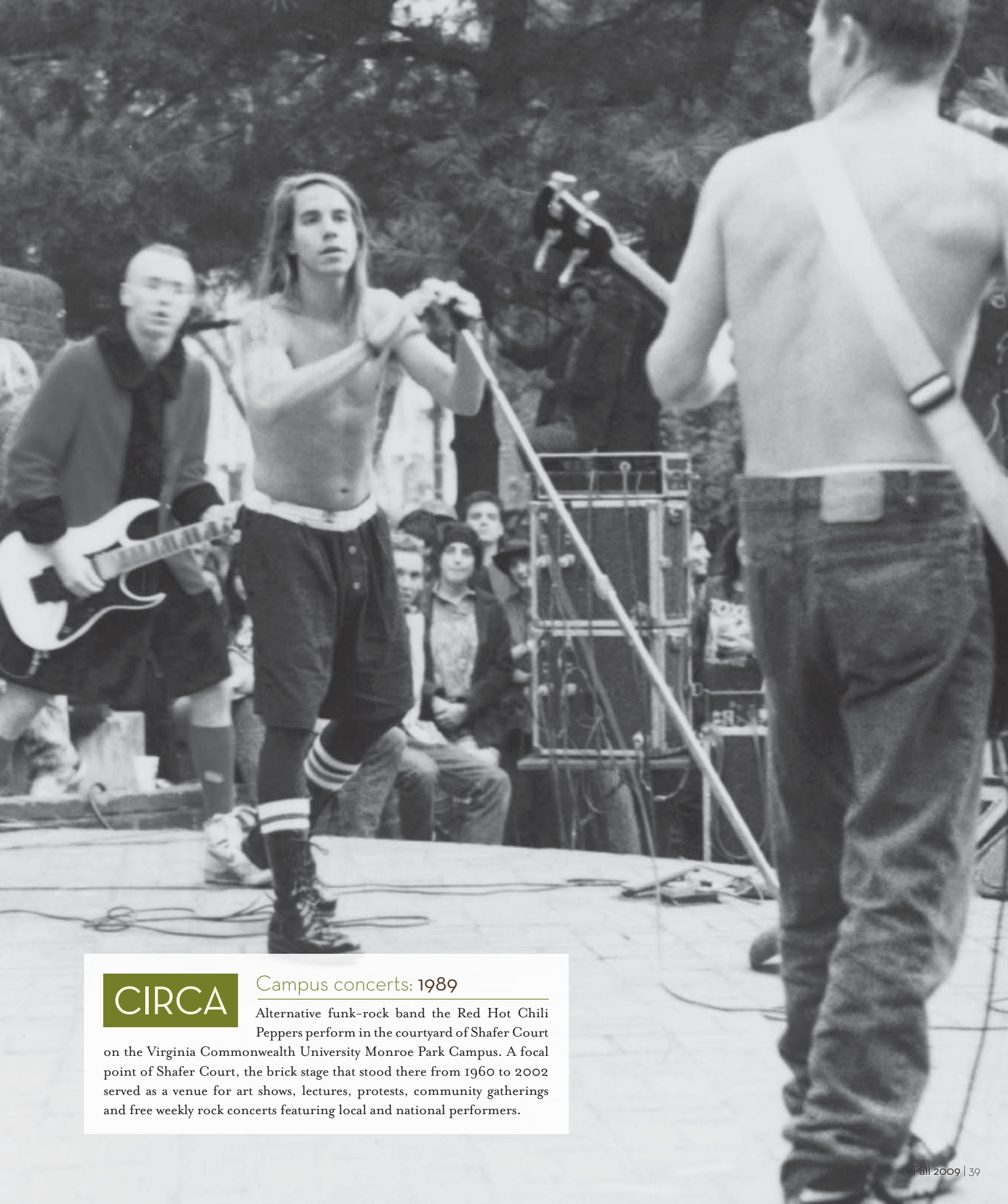
April 23-25

**Reunion Weekend\***

Various events/locations  
(804) 828-2586

\* VCUAA event





## CIRCA

### Campus concerts: 1989

Alternative funk-rock band the Red Hot Chili Peppers perform in the courtyard of Shafer Court on the Virginia Commonwealth University Monroe Park Campus. A focal point of Shafer Court, the brick stage that stood there from 1960 to 2002 served as a venue for art shows, lectures, protests, community gatherings and free weekly rock concerts featuring local and national performers.



## Looking for a new job? Thinking about a career transition?

The VCU Alumni Association has teamed up with CareerBeam to offer professional career counseling services to our alumni.

### With CareerBeam, you can:

- Access research on millions of companies and industries. Searchable databases offer valuable information such as sales figures, key contacts, trends and competitors for 18 million companies and 22 million contacts in hundreds of industries around the world.
- Evaluate your skills and career interests. CareerBeam's unique career assessment tools factor in your values, talents and personality to help you develop – and achieve – professional goals.
- Create professional resumes and cover letters. Whether you're writing a first-time resume or updating a previous one, use CareerBeam to develop effective tools for your job search.

Start your complimentary CareerBeam account today at [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org).



[www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org)



Photo: Marsha Polier Grossman



Photo: Jesse DePriest



Photo: Marsha Polier Grossman