

V I T A E

SUMMER 2015

THE MAGAZINE OF
VALENCIA COLLEGE



DIVISION:
THE TRAYVON/JORDAN PROJECT
Examining the rifts in American society.

VITAE

THE MAGAZINE OF VALENCIA COLLEGE

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VALENCIA COLLEGE

Photograph by Tom Burton

4

Igniting Dreams

Valencia has adopted Central Avenue Elementary, where 10 percent of students live in motels along Highway 192.

CONTENTS

18

Experts Spotlight



Photography by Barry Kirsch



Division: The Trayvon/Jordan Project



Arts Spotlight: Guitarist Series

21

2
News

4
Igniting Dreams

10
Events

12
Division:
The Trayvon/Jordan Project

18
Experts Spotlight
Kristy Pennino

21
Arts Spotlight
Master Guitarist Series

24
In Pictures
Covering the spectrum of campus life
in photographs

28
Class Notes

32
How to Get the Most Out of
Your Hotel Stay

33
Foundation Spotlight
Passion and Promise

Valencia Makes History Center's List of '100 Historic Icons of Orlando'



The 1967 founding of Valencia College was ranked No. 89 in the 100 Historic Icons of Orlando contest, held by the Orlando Remembered Committee of the Historical Society of Central Florida. An “icon,” as defined by the contest’s organizers, is a person, place, event or object associated with the Orlando metropolitan area from 1960 to 1985. The winners—chosen by community vote—are on display at the Orange County Regional History Center through the end of the year. Other icons include Ronnie’s Restaurant, the Merita Bread Factory, and Lake Eola fountain and park, which earned the top spot on the list. Artifacts and photos from the college’s early days can be seen at the exhibit, including a photo of former student and actress Delta Burke in her heyday as Miss Florida, at the groundbreaking ceremony for Valencia’s East Campus.



U.S. Rep. Daniel Webster

School of Public Safety Opens With a Bang

Leaders from law enforcement, fire services and corrections, as well as elected officials, came together to celebrate the opening of the School of Public Safety in April. Guests saw in action the interactive simulator used to train law enforcement officers in active shooter scenarios,

implemented in partnership with the Orange County Sheriff's Office. The new school will offer students interdisciplinary training, expanded courses and programs, more opportunities for career advancement, and dedicated career program advising and student services staff.

Computer Programming Students Score Big Win—Again

For the third straight year, Valencia's computer programming students won the team programming competition at the Fifth Annual Intercollegiate Programming Competition. The event included students from Valencia, Eastern Florida State College, St. Johns River State College, and Seminole State College,

competing for both team and individual prizes. Valencia won the team trophy, and in the individual competition, Valencia students won the top two awards, with student Ricky Lagow placing first, Frank Nkosi Dean coming in second, and Seminole State student Taylor Gratzter placing third.

Photograph courtesy of Colin Archibald





IGNITING



DREAMS

At Valencia's adopted elementary school, children are starting to see themselves as college material.

//BY SUSAN FRITH

Abdriel Figueroa is a soft-spoken fourth-grader from Puerto Rico who likes to play baseball and hopes to be a doctor. But first the Central Avenue Elementary School student must master long division.

"If I say 53 inches, how many feet is that?" asks his mentor, Valencia College student Luis Medrano, as they sit in a classroom with their desks pushed together.

Abdriel taps the air with his fingers, calculating: "4 feet 5 inches."

Then Medrano gives Abdriel a harder problem. "What about 99 inches?"

"I've got it," Abdriel says. He picks up a dry-erase board and starts to divide the number by 12. But he winds up with a remainder that's bigger than his divisor. With a little help from his mentor, he eventually gets it right.

65%

of students who started school at Central Avenue in the fall will finish the year somewhere else.



Medrano started mentoring Abdriel last fall, when he learned that the Osceola Campus of Valencia had “adopted” his alma mater (where his little brother is now a first-grader). “I want to give back to my elementary school,” he says.

Central Avenue had the lowest reading scores in Osceola County last year, with only 26 percent of third-graders passing the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test and just 17 percent passing in math. The school district superintendent shared these concerns with Dr. Kathleen Plinske, president of Valencia’s Osceola Campus.

“I thought, certainly we can send Valencia students to mentor 4th graders,” Plinske says. “But is there something more we can do? Can we adopt the school?”

The answer was an enthusiastic yes. College officials met with Principal Trenisha Simmons to find out the best ways to help, and a partnership was born. Since then Valencia has hosted a day of mock college, donated food, and sent more than 50 student and staff volunteers to serve as weekly reading partners and mentors to Central Avenue third- and fourth-graders. “They are helping to build that child’s internal desire to be their best and to overcome obstacles,” says Simmons, and “building that desire to learn.”

While Abdriel deals with products and quotients, his school confronts some other daunting numbers. Sixty-five percent of students who started school at Central Avenue in the fall will finish the year somewhere else. (Pawnshops and apartment complexes near the school suggest a community in flux, and about 10 percent of students’ families are homeless.)



Kathleen Plinske, president of Valencia’s Osceola and Lake Nona campuses, led the effort to adopt Central Avenue Elementary.

Because of the high student turnover, says Simmons, “you’re always having to re-teach expectations and re-teach school procedures.” But this challenge makes her determined. “If you’re here five months, the whole year, or two months, we want this to be the best experience you can have.” The extra role models from Valencia are a help. “The kids love their teachers and listen to their teachers, but when they hear something coming from a teenager, they think, ‘This must be cool,’” Simmons says. On top of that, it’s “one more person coming here just for me. So I must be special.” She encourages mentors to spend time getting to know their students, reminding them, “When you remove the numbers, there is a child there.”

“I think the adoption of Central Avenue is so central to our mission of community outreach and responding to our partners’ needs,” says Plinske. The project is also aligned with the “Got College?” effort to boost college attendance throughout Osceola County. “It’s becoming clearer that, if we don’t start these conversations earlier, by the time students are in high school, they’re more difficult. If a student doesn’t see themselves as college material, it’s hard to change that mindset.”



The kids love it and look forward to their Valencia student coming in.”



Top and left photographs by Tom Burton

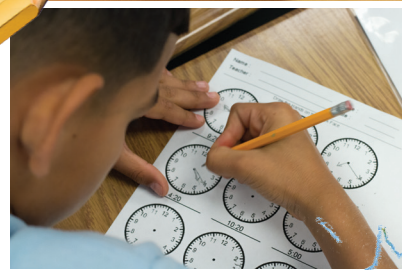
According to Sarah McKenney, Central Avenue’s dean of students, Valencia volunteers “have really embraced our school 110 percent. They want to know what they can do outside of mentoring for us. They’ve helped with shelving books, working in the cafeteria. They’ve asked, ‘Can we go into the classrooms?’

“It’s been an amazing experience,” she adds. “The kids love it and look forward to their Valencia student coming in.”

Valencia instructors have also stepped in to help. Liz Earle, a professor of reading, takes part in the Bookmark Buddies program, tutoring a third-grader from Colombia who was on the cusp of passing the state reading exam. Earle



started her career as an elementary and middle school teacher and says she enjoys the opportunity to work with younger students again. (During a recent visit, she spent a few minutes talking with her student, “a very motivated little boy,” about the baby tooth he’d just lost.) Central Avenue families speak 17 different languages, and while Simmons considers this diversity an asset, she knows it’s critical for her students to be proficient in English.



Top and middle: Abdriel Figueroa gets help on his schoolwork from mentor Luis Medrano.

Below: Central Avenue students measure fruit punch to learn fractions during a recent visit to Valencia.

While Valencia has a long history of community outreach, the college has been working to broaden these efforts as part of its accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Examples of recent projects include:

Valencia engineering professor Deb Hall and her students teamed up with fifth-graders at **Tildenville Elementary School** in Winter Garden to build three solar power generators for Uganda orphanages. (While connecting wires, the kids made the connection that science and technology can improve lives around the world.)

Valencia's horticulture department worked with volunteers at the **Edgewood Children's Ranch** to turn acres of land into an experimental garden that provides educational opportunities for the young people who live and attend school there. It's hoped that the garden might one day produce income for the ranch.

Valencia East launched a health academy at **Lawton Chiles Elementary School**, offering hands-on lessons about how much sugar lurks in some of their favorite drinks, how to brush their teeth properly, and how to take care of their bodies through exercise.



Valencia students entertained an audience from Central Avenue Elementary by making ice cream with liquid nitrogen.

Simmons wanted to make the idea of college more concrete for Central Avenue students. So, in February, Valencia invited fourth- and fifth-graders to Osceola Campus for a day of learning, fun, and smashed bananas. As college students for a day, they got to sample ice cream made with liquid nitrogen. They witnessed the spectacular effects of freezing flowers and bananas in liquid nitrogen and dropping them on the floor. The students also got a lesson on fractions by measuring fruit punch and tested their engineering skills by seeing who could construct the tallest candy-toothpick tower sturdy enough to hold a paperweight. "For the vast majority of them, it was their first time setting foot on a college campus," Simmons says.

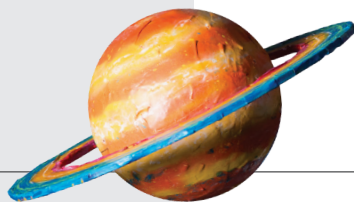
At the end of the day, they left with totebags full of books donated by the Education Foundation of Osceola County and Goodwill Central Florida. The two schools were laying plans for another campus visit in May.

A big smile breaks across Abdriel's face when asked about his day in college. "Oh it was awesome," he says. "My favorite part was when we were building a tower with toothpicks and gummies."

McKenney adds, "It's more than coming and working with them academically. It's building those relationships and sharing with them that there is something outside of elementary and middle and high school the kids might not have thought about."

Recognizing that hunger is another big concern for Central Avenue (with 100 percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunches), Valencia has donated food for the school pantry—nonperishables as well as vegetables grown in its campus garden that can be sent home over the weekend. (Valencia's horticulture department is also helping Central Avenue expand its own school garden.) According to Simmons, the extra food makes a difference. If students have been hungry all weekend, then on Monday "they're not going to be thinking about academics."

When Medrano arrives at Central Avenue on a recent Wednesday morning, he signs in at the front desk and picks up a volunteer badge. Running into his former first-grade teacher, he stops for a quick hug. Then he's off to Abdriel's fourth-grade classroom, where his teacher has prepared a bright yellow folder of materials to work on. They head



for a room specially reserved for students and their mentors.

After chatting for a bit, they get to work. Abdriel looks at pictures of clocks and writes the time next to each one of them. “Muy bien,” says Medrano. Next comes a review of some measurements and division—a bit harder.

Finally, they focus on reading. Abdriel quietly reads aloud a passage titled, “Who Owns the Arctic?” and Medrano questions him about the main idea.

At the end of the year, Central Avenue will examine test scores and other assessments to measure the effects of the partnership. What they’re already seeing, says Simmons, are improvements in students’ self esteem and ability to verbalize what they know in front of their classmates.

According to McKenney, Abdriel has “come out of his shell” since Medrano started mentoring him. “That is probably just important as the academic portion of it: being able to speak or explain what it is that you know.”

Medrano adds, “In the fall he did have a little more trouble with English, but it’s surprising to me how he got the language really quick. He’s really bright in math, and I enjoy when sometimes he teaches me new tricks in multiplication and division. That’s cool.” In giving back to his alma mater, Medrano says he’s

gained new leadership skills, which will help him pursue his goal of a career in business administration.

Abdriel thinks his mentor is pretty cool, too. “He teaches me things I didn’t know.” Now, he says, his English has improved enough that he’s able to help his mother when they go shopping.

Plinske’s voice catches when she talks about the power of the partnership. At the end of the first campus visit, she recalls, “There were probably 50 or 60 Valencia volunteers standing as a group and waving goodbye to the kids. When the last little boy boarded the bus, he got halfway up and turned around. And he proclaimed, ‘We’ll see you when we’re older.’ And then he got back on the bus,” she says. “He believes his classmates are going to college, and no one can take that away from him.” ▼

 valenciacollege.edu/igniting-dreams



“

He believes his classmates are going to college, and no one can take that away from him.”



Clockwise: Building solar suitcases at Tildenville Elementary; horticulture students harvesting vegetables with kids from the Edgewood Children’s Ranch; Valencia students teach health lessons to students at Lawton Chiles Elementary.

JUNE

Bullshot Crummond

By Ron House, Diz White, Alan Shearman, John Neville-Andrews and Derek Cunningham. Based on an idea by Ron House and Diz White.

June 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13 at 7:30 p.m.

June 7, 14 at 2 p.m.

Black Box Theater, East Campus

Tickets: \$12 general admission; \$10 for students, faculty/staff, alumni and seniors.

valenciacollege.edu/arts



"Energy of the Human Spirit," 2015, acrylic & pencil on canvas, by Paul Scarborough

Paul Scarborough: Paintings

June 12 – July 31

Opening Reception: June 12 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Anita S. Wooten Gallery, East Campus

Admission is free.

valenciacollege.edu/arts



The campy farce "Bullshot Crummond" takes place in 1930s England.



JULY

Valencia Dance Summer Repertory Concert

July 10 & 11 at 8 p.m.

Performing Arts Center, East Campus

Tickets: \$12 general admission; \$10 for students, faculty/staff, alumni and seniors; \$6 for children under 12.

valenciacollege.edu/arts

Alumni & Friends Networking Reception

July 16 from 6 – 8 p.m.

Business casual

Valencia District Office, 5th Floor

alumni@valenciacollege.edu



AUGUST

Rob McCaffrey: Digital Artist

Aug. 14 – Oct. 2

Opening Reception: Sept. 11 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Anita S. Wooten Gallery, East Campus

Admission is free.

valenciacollege.edu/arts

SEPTEMBER

Valencia College 3rd Annual Walk/Run for Heroes

Sept. 11 at 6:30 p.m.

Sponsored by the Valencia Alumni Association. Funds raised support scholarships for emergency responders through the Rotary Club of Lake Nona's Sept. 11 Memorial Fund.

Osceola Campus

alumni@valenciacollege.edu

...e've humans.
...ean, how-how
...event can one
...cies really be?

I don't think racism
is going away any
time soon.

I don't think I belong
in a category.

GREED IS THE REASON
WE ARE NOT FURTHER
ALONG WITH ONE UNITY
AS A RACE

Not that I didn't care
what was going on, I just
didn't have time for it.

DIVISION:

...everything wrong
...the world today,
...:ll feel we are
...oving overall.

I think the more we're
taught to be scared, the
worse it's going to get.

Taking a side is
sexier than telling
the whole story.

I don't think most
people are racist
or prejudiced.

I think our
generation is more
accepting and more
open to others.

A LOT OF AMERICANS DON'T
KNOW THAT ALL BLACK
PEOPLE AREN'T FROM
"THE HOOD".

When people realize
what they can change
within themselves, then
that's when change
can begin.

Every DAY I deal
with racism. Every
day. And- it beats
you down.

Social media with
these serious events
has given ignorant
people bullhorns.

Every bit of progress
we've ever made is
because of a
people's movement.

YOU CONVERSATE,
YOU ABITATE, ...
then YOU DEMONSTRATE.

THE TRAYVON/JORDAN PROJECT

//BY LINDA SHRIEVES BEATY

It's Thursday, six days before opening night of "Division: The Trayvon/Jordan Project."

In Valencia's Black Box Theater, 15 actors are scattered on a barren stage. Black, white, Hispanic, Asian. They sit on stools, perch on the edge of the stage or stalk around. Many haven't finished memorizing their lines, so they pace about the stage, scripts stuffed into the back pockets of their jeans.

In this play, there are no props, no furniture, no scenery. Instead, the actors come wielding opinions.

"Trayvon Martin was a thug."

"A mother lost her son there. A father lost his son there. That is what came into my head. No matter what happened. What they did or did not do... A family lost their son there."

"The picture that was shown of this black boy was a picture of Trayvon Martin from years ago. He looks like a little kid."

"Nobody needs to die for this kind of stuff."

Strung together, these opinions form a series of monologues—and a play that examines both our differences and desire for peace.

"Our world is divided and we need to figure out why," said John DiDonna, director of "Division"

and the chair of Valencia College's theater program. "'Division' is not about what happened to Trayvon and to Jordan. It's about the impact that those events have had, the pebbles that fell into the water and all the ripples that we're still feeling across the country."

The play, which opened on Feb. 11 and played to nearly sold-out crowds every night during its six-day run, examines the aftermath and widely varying opinions about what happened in 2012, when 17-year-old Trayvon Martin died in Sanford in an altercation with a neighborhood watch volunteer, and when 17-year-old Jordan Davis was killed in Jacksonville by a customer at a gas station who shot him after arguing with Jordan and a carload of teens about their music.

Onstage, an actor talks about the significance of the Trayvon Martin case. Although many young black men have been killed over the years by police or other authorities, "Trayvon," he says, "was the straw that broke the camel's back."

Part of a yearlong collaboration in Orlando's theatrical community, "Division" marks the second of three plays that reflect on those incidents. The first, "The Trayvon Martin Project," was produced jointly by Beth Marshall Presents and Penguin

Point Productions, and was staged at Valencia. The third play, "Hoodies," is scheduled to debut this summer.

To write the script, DiDonna created a playwriting class that worked only on this project. Ten students eagerly signed on for the class, which started in August 2014. During the first month of class, the students reached out to friends—and strangers, including politicians, reporters and photographers who covered the case, and protesters—asking for their opinions and reactions to the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis.

"Personally, I tried to make sure I reached as many people as possible," said Valencia theater student Carolyn Ducker. "I talked to my best friend, who is black, and her older brother. He dresses in Polos and khakis all the time and is very clean cut, but I learned from him that he is routinely stopped by police."

Although the students could interview strangers, Ducker thought she'd be more successful in getting honest opinions if she approached friends. However, she tried to find acquaintances with a wide variety of opinions.

"I went to my mom's office," Ducker said. That's where she interviewed a woman who formed the basis of one of the play's most opinionated characters, who was sympathetic to George



Hannibal Callens

The goal, said DiDonna, was to get people to listen to one another—and respect, rather than hate, their differences.



Jade Rivera



Brandon Jimenez

DIVISION BY THE NUMBERS

10 Valencia students signed up for a fall class with one assignment: Write a play about the Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis shootings.

The students conducted **145** hours of interviews with people on all sides of the issues, including lawyers, politicians, journalists, activists and ordinary citizens.

The class whittled the lengthy interviews into a **90**-minute play.

15 actors portrayed many characters and points of view onstage.

The play was performed for **6** nights before nearly sold-out audiences.

Zimmerman, the watch volunteer who shot Trayvon Martin. “Another one of the people I interviewed was an Asian person from the Philippines,” Ducker added. “There, no one is allowed to have guns, except for the police. So she had interesting views on gun control.”

The students and DiDonna had to learn to interview—and respect others’ opinions—without inserting their own or arguing with the people they were interviewing. “It was definitely tough for me to hear some of the things I heard, but you have to remain neutral,” said Valencia theater student Stelson Telfort, who was one of the students in the playwriting class and later acted in the play as well.

The students spent weeks interviewing people—including Barry Kirsch, a freelance news photographer who shot more than 30,000 pictures of the Trayvon Martin case, from the time George Zimmerman turned himself in at the Sanford police station through the trial. One of the other characters portrayed onstage was Francis Oliver, an activist and former NAACP field director from Sanford.

After compiling more than 140 hours of taped interviews—and then transcribing the interviews into thousands of pages—DiDonna and his students shaped the interviews and opinions into a 90-minute play.

The topics addressed in the play range widely, from Florida’s Stand Your Ground statute and gun rights, to the worries of black mothers who have to warn their sons about their behavior in public. Onstage, the actors debate the role of the media in fanning the flames of racism and stereotypes; while others note that social media—including “Black Twitter”—tell the stories of

people whose voices aren’t usually heard in mainstream media. One black actress recounts how, growing up in Canada, the races and cultures blended better than they do in the United States. Another character recounts how, as a white American, he discovered what it was like to be in the minority while studying abroad for a year.

The goal, said DiDonna, was to get people to listen to one another—and respect, rather than hate, their differences. “Listening—and having the ability to understand other people—is really what this show is about,” said cast member Jade Rivera.

Just as important as the play, said DiDonna, were the “talkbacks”—question-and-answer sessions in which audience members can talk to the cast and director. Because “Division” was designed to foster conversation on race, DiDonna scheduled talkbacks following each performance of the play.

“We knew that would be a very important component of the play,” said DiDonna. “The play is designed to foster communication, to spark a conversation. The play is an ongoing conversation of clashing viewpoints. And by the end of the play, we don’t give you any answers.”

After the opening night, the cast and members of the audience—including Jordan Davis’ father, Ron, and representatives from the Trayvon Martin Foundation—talked for 30 minutes about the play’s impact.

“I think the play triggered a conversation in the audience. I think a lot of people in the audience didn’t realize that it would have that effect,” Davis said afterward.

Oliver, the community activist and Sanford resident who helped organize many of the Trayvon Martin protests,



Actress Avis-Marie Barnes (foreground) portrayed Sanford activist Francis Oliver, seen onscreen.

recognized herself on stage, but said the play forced her to do some soul-searching. “My character, to me, was still living in the past, but these kids were trying to move forward,” she said. “I went home and I replayed this whole play in my head. It seemed as if the young people in the play were trying to move forward, but I was living in the ’60s and ’70s.

“You know, race played a part in the killing of Trayvon and Jordan, but the division in society played a bigger part, because we are so divided into so many different ways. The young are divided from the old, the black is divided from the white. The Methodists are divided from the Baptists. It seems like in every category we can name, there’s division. With this division, sometimes we get animosity, we get hate. We need to strive to come together, talk to each other, listen to each other and understand each other’s differences.”

Another audience member said the play made her uncomfortable at times. “I think I got a headache during the play. I found myself gritting my teeth the whole time,” she said. “But I also found myself thinking, ‘I am guilty of that.’”

Even the actors found the play had changed them.

“You know, we always joke about the headlines that say, ‘Florida Man did this’ or ‘Florida Man did that,’” said cast member Brandon Jimenez. “He’s like the worst superhero ever. It’s funny, but it’s making me a little uncomfortable. I mean, I

am ‘Florida Man’...I think ‘Florida Man’ needs to get himself together—and change Florida.”

For the actors, the playwrights, and DiDonna, the “Division” experience may not be over. Leaders in several communities are discussing bringing the play there.

“We’re going further with this,” says DiDonna, who met with Jordan Davis’ family in Jacksonville on Feb. 16, which the city of Jacksonville declared Jordan Davis Day. There, he also met family members of Emmett Till, a black teenager murdered in Mississippi in 1955, and Oscar Grant, who was shot at the Fruitvale BART Station outside Oakland, Calif., in 2009.

And as talks continue for the play to be revived elsewhere, the actors are debating their new roles.

“For us, the cast, it gave us the drive to spread this message: It’s ok to be different, it’s ok to be divided, but don’t belittle or judge anybody for being divided,” said Telfort. “The conversation is still continuing. People are talking about how much of an impact (the play) had on us, how each of us is going to try to find things that we can do to continue to make a change—whether it’s through voting or becoming an activist. We’re all going through that process to see what we can do.” ❏

“

If Michael Dunn had just beat up Jordan Davis, it wouldn’t be a story.”



Photographs on this page by Barry Kirsch

Photos of Trayvon Martin demonstrations by news photographer Barry Kirsch served as a backdrop onstage.



Kristy Pennino

Teaches Students Better Communication by Design

//BY ROGER MOORE

The side of a Central Florida law enforcement agency's cruisers has that all-important credo, written in large letters—"To Protect and Serve."

"You see this authoritative, confidence building message," says Kristy Pennino, professor and chair of Valencia's Graphic and Interactive Design program.

She chuckles.

"But they did it in Comic Sans. It's the perfect font for communicating with fifth or sixth graders. Seventh grade? By that age, we're all getting too old to be impressed by that."

A classic design mistake, Pennino says—not using the right typescript, a font that's easy to read and that matches the tone of the message you're trying to get across.

"Whoever did that plainly wasn't a designer."

We live in a world of design, with everything from the cell phone we use to the car we drive, from the ads we see to the graphics, colors and words we view on websites and in social media. Pennino teaches the people who create those finely honed visual messages.





Pennino's students who earn an Associate in Science Degree in Graphic and Interactive Design learn about fonts that convey messages, colors that reflexively give viewers, readers and consumers "the warm fuzzies," how to research a graphic assignment and execute a design that underscores the client's message, with or without words.

Pennino, a Virginia Commonwealth University alumna who has been on the Valencia faculty since 2001, sets out to upend her students' ingrained beliefs about appearances on the first day of the program's introductory classes.

"I ask, 'Who in here believes you should never judge a book by its cover?' Most of the class raises their hands. Then I tell them, 'Guess what? It's a graphic designer's job to make us

judge something BASED on that first look. Next time you're in the wine aisle, picking a wine, or deciding what mac and cheese you want for dinner, look at how you're deciding. Do you want the wine that looks old and distinguished? Do you want the mac and cheese that looks more generic and affordable, or do you want the one that looks expensive, cheesier, better?' The designer has figured out how we can judge those products, just by the label."

Pennino and her colleagues teach designers-in-training how to visually brand themselves, a company, an organization, or a product. Students learn how to go about creating a design that will do what they intend it to do by documenting every step—brainstorming, doing research, rough sketches, refining those sketches.

“

We use the techniques of fine art, the understanding of color and texture to communicate our ideas. We make your eye go where we want it!”

"Design is a process, not a result," Pennino says. Every class she teaches has its own Facebook page where classmates pick each other's brains and critique each other's works in progress. Alumni go on to four-year or advanced degree programs, and end up in ad agencies or media companies such as MTV.

You learn to accept "that design is subjective," says 2013 graduate Bryttni Wolfe, who now works at Echo Interaction Group in Orlando designing mobile applications for

Android phones and operating systems. She credits the rigorous process of creating a portfolio, judged by classmates and faculty at Valencia, for landing her that job. Pennino and others taught her that the "process" involves a lot of people and a lot of opinions—"the design firm you work for, the client hiring that firm, co-workers."

Pennino says that the hardest thing students with an artistic bent have to do is explain what they're studying to their parents. It's art that sounds like psychology.

"We use the techniques of fine art, the understanding of color and texture to communicate our ideas," Pennino says. "We make your eye go where we want it!"

And, her students learn, where the eye goes, the mind follows.

"If you look at BP's logo, the one that looks like a flower, it's very hard to associate 'big giant oil spill' with a logo that looks like a daisy," Pennino says, citing a classic example of a company that needed visual "re-branding." That new logo's shape and colors influence opinion of BP.

"I want students to know how to do that, but to realize, as 'Spider-Man' learned, that with great power comes great responsibility." ▼

See related article: "From Orlando to Silicon Valley: The Tale of One Graphic Design Graduate"

▶ valenciacollege.edu/designgrad



Kristy Pennino critiques poster ideas from students Rebekah Rigel and Shai Nesmith in an advanced graphic design class.



Guitar Heroes Unite at Valencia Concert Series

//BY JIM ABBOTT

If you want to start a concert series devoted to guitars, it helps if your boss also happens to be a six-string fanatic.

For Troy Gifford, music program director at Valencia College, the seeds for an inaugural Master Guitarist Series in February were planted in a conversation he had with another guitar lover: Valencia College President Sandy Shugart.

“We’re both guitarists, and we were chatting at commencement last year,” Gifford says. “I was talking about the artists we were bringing in, and he threw out the idea: ‘What if we do a guitar festival?’ I thought it was awesome.”

From an influential Argentinian classical master to a YouTube sensation, the concert series reflected the instrument’s diverse potential in four days of workshops and performances at Valencia College East Campus Performing Arts Center.



“Almost every culture has an instrument like a guitar,” says Shugart, whose six-string skills have been showcased on his own studio recordings and in concert performances. “It’s a really common tool of expression in many cultures. In our own culture, there are many radically different styles of playing the instrument, so I thought it would be fun to showcase those styles.”

The series opened with a tribute to renowned Argentinian classical guitarist and composer Jorge Morel that featured performances by Gifford, UCF music students and faculty, as well as one of the master’s former students. Now an Orlando resident, Morel, 83, was presented a lifetime achievement award before watching guitarists tackle his intricately constructed original compositions and arrangements of Gershwin and Broadway classics.

Morel was impressed with the student musicians.

“The way that we practiced 50 years ago is the same way we practice today,” Morel says. “Except today there are more pieces written with more difficulty, more demanding technique, but the young generation can cope with that very well.”

Technical skills were the focus of a workshop by Adam Rafferty, a YouTube phenom for his fleet-fingered solo guitar versions of hits by Michael Jackson (“Billie Jean”) and Stevie Wonder (“Superstition”). Rafferty emphasized the importance

of rhythm, telling students to put down their guitars and tap along to syncopated beats he played on an African drum.

“People always talk about rhythm as if it’s one of those cryptic things: ‘Well, you just have to feel it,’” Rafferty says. “That’s a bunch of baloney. There’s a science to it, just like there’s a science to harmony.”

Although Rafferty has generated 10 million YouTube views from aspiring guitarists in search of playing tips, he’s an advocate of the formal music training offered at Valencia.

“If people want to be professional musicians I think a college degree is the way to do it,” he says. “From an educational standpoint, you’re exposed to things like music theory, having to read music. You get to see what geniuses over thousands of years have figured out. You get to sing in a choir. Get forced into uncomfortable situations that force you out of comfort zones.”

For classical guitarist Matt Palmer, another performer in the series, formal music education started in college, after years in rock bands. The focus of a 2014 cover story in *Classical Guitar Magazine*, Palmer incorporates rock technique into his style.

Palmer’s fame is based on his unique method of playing lightning-fast scales, a combination of right-hand patterns rooted in classical music and a left-hand influenced by the work of rock guitarists.

“If someone takes into consideration all that electric guitarists have done over the years, those guys have really got something going on,” Palmer says. “Not to pay attention to that is a mistake and maybe a little dishonest. I didn’t want to abandon all the things that were already working for me.”

“Nothing comes instantly on the guitar,” he says. “You need to find some good information, develop a good idea and believe in it, then work on it over a period of years.”



“

People always talk about rhythm as if it's one of those cryptic things: 'Well, you just have to feel it.' That's a bunch of baloney. There's a science to it, just like there's a science to harmony."

In workshops, Palmer offers aspiring musicians practical career advice: "Always be ready to play a gig," he says. "Every one you play will result in something else. Connections that will pay off in the future. I played my Carnegie Hall debut [in 2014] on three-days' notice."

A hybrid approach also marks the style of Appalachian luthier and award-winning finger-style guitarist Wayne Henderson, who closed the series with an afternoon performance on the lawn at Valencia's East Campus.

Henderson's fame escalated in the wake of "Clapton's Guitar," a 2006 book that chronicled the guitar maker's work on an instrument commissioned by rocker Eric Clapton.

"His playing style is idiosyncratic," says Shugart, who became Henderson's neighbor after buying a vacation home a few years ago in rural Virginia. "He doesn't really play like anyone else and he's a great talker."

Injecting Henderson's distinctive approach into the series echoes its goal, Shugart says:

"It's about showing the breadth of styles of the instrument."

 valenciacollege.edu/guitar



From opposite page,
clockwise: Guitarists Jorge Morel;
Adam Rafferty; Wayne Henderson.

IN PICTURES

Valencia staffers and students participated in a campus-wide discussion of the proposed Valencia/UCF downtown campus.

A series of doors gave students a chance to write their thoughts down about the opportunities the new campus might open.



Standing at attention were all branches of public service for the unveiling of the School of Public Safety in April.



Dancers help celebrate the tree-naming ceremony on East Campus. "Serenitree" was the name chosen by popular vote for the 100-year-old live oak that has become a historic landmark.

EMS/Paramedic students take a selfie with Orlando Regional Medical Center's Air Care helicopter during a training session in February.



IN PICTURES

Japanese Taiko drummers performed at an Asian Cultural Expo in April. Japanese and Indian food tastings, mindfulness meditation lessons and lectures added to the cultural experience.



It's called Capoeira, a Brazilian dance-like martial art, and it wowed students attending the International Spring Festival on East Campus.

Students share a group hug with Gov. Rick Scott during a visit to Osceola Campus to share his proposal for tax-free textbooks.



Becky Kwitowski, '96, '98

Becky works as an RN at Winnie Palmer Hospital, where she was nominated for the Nurse of the Year Award in 2014 by her peers. She wrote and published a resource book devoted to the bedside nurse, and manages a website and blog called Expert GN that offers resources for student nurses and graduates. Becky is also a preceptor to many Valencia nursing students and new graduate nurses.

1 David Torre, '02

David Torre was elected to a seat on the Winter Park Public Library Board of Trustees.



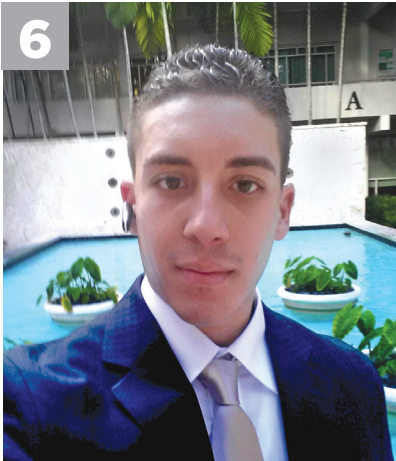
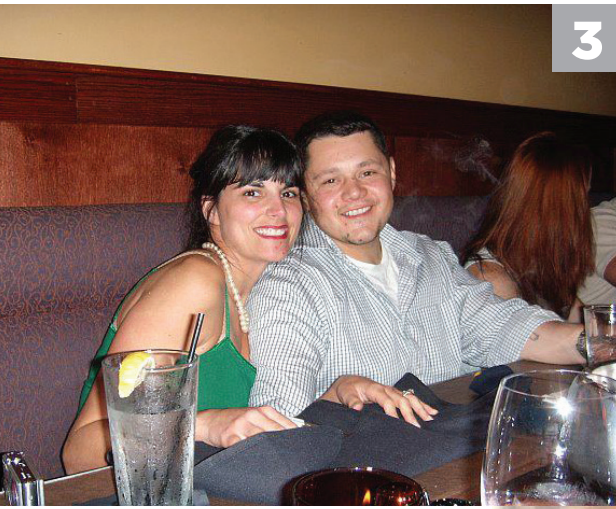
Jennifer Mezquita, '02

After graduating from Valencia in 2002, Jennifer transferred to the University of Florida where she earned a bachelor's degree in Food and Resource Economics. Her concern for breaking the barriers of access into higher education for underrepresented and underserved populations led her to pursue a career in higher education. She continued at the University of Central Florida where she earned a master's degree in Educational Leadership and is now pursuing a doctorate in Educational Leadership: Higher Education and Policy Studies. Jennifer credits her educational success to the support and guidance she received during her years at Valencia as a Bridges to Success student. She currently works with Valencia students as the manager of Student Services on the West Campus.



2 Santos Maldonado, '07

Santos recently received UCF's Award of Excellence for maintaining a high cumulative GPA. He plans to graduate in May at the age of 60, and credits Valencia for helping him rise from homelessness. He continues to work at Second Harvest Food Bank, helping feed needy children in four counties. His eight-year career has been life changing, giving him the opportunity to meet the likes of Chelsea Clinton and to travel the world.



3 Jon Arguello, '09

Jon was appointed CEO of PBM Specialties, a manufacturer of laser engraved specialty products. He left Valencia to earn his bachelor's and master's degrees, and later graduated law school in the top 25 percent of his class.

4 Rebecca Galarza, '09

Rebecca Galarza is an actor, singer, dancer, and model in Orlando. She can currently be seen in "Let's Be Cops" with Daymon Wayans Jr. and Jake Johnson. She also appeared in "The Investigator," which opened in select theaters last fall.

5 Alexandra Heidler, '09

Alexandra is enrolled in the master's program at Syracuse University in New York for Library and Information Sciences. She also leads a student organization that hosted an "Edible Banned Book Fair," where on display were edible representations of books that had been banned in the United States.

6 Mark Berrios-Ayala, '11

Mark is enrolled at Florida International University College of Law where he plans to graduate in 2017.

7 Shardeh Berry, '12

Shardeh is working on a Masters in Emergency Management, while interning with the Seminole County office of Emergency Management.

8 Ismael Charrouf, '12

Ismael Charrouf is finishing his last semester at the University of Central Florida, majoring in Latin American Studies with a minor in Middle Eastern Studies. Over the course of his time at UCF, Ismael has participated in a number of international programs and has gotten the opportunity to travel and represent his school abroad. Last summer he went to Istanbul as winner of the “High and Dry: Addressing the Middle East Water Challenge” essay contest, where he met with American, Arab and Turkish experts on water scarcity in the Middle East from both the public and private sectors. The conference was sponsored by the Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd Program for Strategic Research and Studies at UCF, where Ismael has been

awarded the program fellowship this semester, focusing the core of his research on Saudi food security. Most recently, Ismael was chosen to compete in the 16th annual London International Model United Nations conference as part of a team of 12 students from the United Nations Association at UCF. There he represented the Sudan in the League of Arab States, this being the first year that the committee was simulated in Arabic. Ismael is currently also working on the capstone project for his Latin American Studies degree which will discuss the concerns over the newly proposed Nicaragua Canal and the opportunities it presents to that country.



9

9 Tasha Marshall, '12

I am a new mommy to Raelynn Rae born on October 4, 2014. I am in my second semester at the University of Florida pursuing a degree in Sports Management while preparing for the graduation of my oldest daughter, Alexandra, who will attend Valencia in the fall.



10

Leonardo Rodriguez, '12

Leonardo is finishing a bachelor's degree in psychology at UCF and plans to graduate this summer. Along with school, he works as a student services advisor at Valencia.

Alejandra Ascanio, '13

Alejandra is pursuing a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in marketing at UCF, while working as a career peer advisor with Career Services and a research assistant for the office of Counseling and Psychological Services.

10 Marcee Stofflet, '13

Marcee graduated summa cum laude from DeVry University with a bachelor's degree in technical management.

Let Everyone Know What You've Been Up To!

To be featured in Class Notes, visit valenciacollege.edu/alumni/class_notes and fill in the submission form or mail to: Class Notes Editor, Valencia Alumni Association, 1768 Park Center Dr., Orlando, FL 32835.

The Alumni Association can also help to spread the word! Let us know about your meetups, networking events, annual retreats, reunions and save-the-dates that your fellow alumni might like to attend or did attend with you. Whether it's getting a group together for sporting events, charity fundraisers, a day at the parks or just brunch and lunch, let us know. And if you send pictures, we might just include them in the next issue. We can share your adventures and good times with our readers, so that next time they can plan on joining in on the fun!

And don't forget: If you have an idea for a future article, please contact the Alumni Association. Send all suggestions to: alumni@valenciacollege.edu



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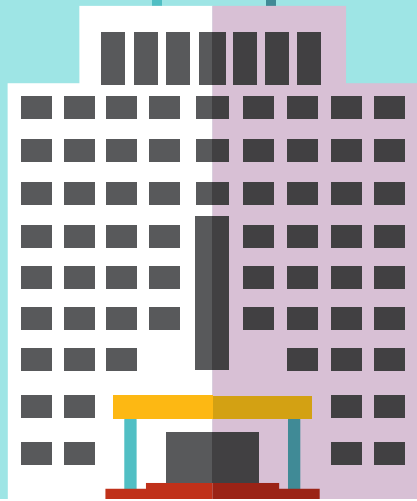
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HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR **HOTEL** STAY



Hospitality expert Jim Inglis shares some money-saving tips for your next vacation.

Professor Jim Inglis has served as Valencia's program director for hospitality and tourism for 15 years and also teaches housekeeping and front desk operations. He has more than 20 years of hotel management experience, having worked for Hilton and the Choice Hotels group. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association and the Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association.



Don't rely on third-party websites.

While you can find a lot of good deals online, third-party travel websites don't always have the best communication with hotels. It's not uncommon for those reservations to get lost or mixed up.



Call the hotel directly for the best results—and rates.

You can avoid the runaround if you deal directly with the hotel. And, nowadays, most hotels will match the prices you find online. Skip the hotel chain's 1-800 number and call the property where you'll be staying for the best rates and room availability.



Make any special requests upon reservation.

Requests could include a crib or rollaway bed, smoking or non-smoking room, or a room with a special view. If you wait until check-in to make requests, it will be a matter of first-come, first-served and you could lose out.



Ask for discounts.

Most hotels will offer discounts that aren't advertised, such as corporate rates, AAA and AARP discounts, or their own specials—if you ask.



The best time for an upgrade is at check-in.

Sometimes, for just a little more money, you can get a much nicer room. Talk to the front desk clerk to see what rooms are still available and if they would be willing to work a deal with you. More than likely, they'd rather give you a discount than have an empty room.



Beware of hidden resort fees.

Resort fees aren't indicated in the advertised room rate and could add \$20 a day to your stay for things you might not even use, like a fitness center, pool or daily newspaper delivery.

Passion and Promise

Valencia's Distinguished Graduate is Chasing Her Dreams Far From Florida

//BY LINDA SHRIEVES BEATY

Rebecca Nash's journey to college started, unbelievably, when she dropped out of high school.

Yet Rebecca, who is the 2014-15 Mary Smedley Collier Distinguished Graduate, succeeded by following her passions and her conscience.

Her odyssey started when she dropped out of high school and went to work in a card shop to help support her family when her father was seriously ill.

But selling greeting cards wasn't fulfilling. So in her free time, Rebecca earned her GED and began volunteering at a domestic violence shelter in Broward County. There, she became a peer facilitator for 14 teenage girls—many of whom had been kidnapped from their villages in the Democratic Republic of Congo and sold to human traffickers.

Their stories of sexual violence and rape camps—where many were raped by soldiers—pained Rebecca, who'd spent much of her life learning of the Holocaust from her father, a Russian Jew. "I think what stuck with me was that this wasn't considered out of the norm," said Rebecca. "Women are targeted in the Congo."



Mary Smedley Collier, Valencia's first Distinguished Graduate

She vowed to do something about the atrocities there. After her father recovered, Rebecca moved to Orlando and enrolled at Valencia, living on a bare-bones budget, but passionate about classes. Here, she met Professor Michael Savage, a former British military officer who teaches a course on the history of genocide.

After attending a campus discussion on the current conflict in Syria, Rebecca stopped to speak to Savage, who'd served on the panel. As Rebecca explained her work with the Congolese teens and her desire to help the women of Central Africa, Savage suggested she major in gendecide—the study of genocide targeted specifically against women.

With Savage as her mentor, Rebecca conducted research on the Congo, its relationship to the Rwandan genocide and wrote papers and presented workshops that wowed Valencia professors. After leading a workshop on Africa's "silenced voices" last fall, she received a standing ovation from students and faculty.

Savage, meanwhile, challenged Rebecca to write papers that would be considered graduate school work. "He was phenomenal when it came

to guiding me," Rebecca says. "He pushed me harder than I'd ever been pushed." Savage handed her stacks of books to read, demanded better writing and helped her set a career goal—to become a genocide analyst for the United Nations.

Now 20 years old, Rebecca will skip her final two years of undergraduate study and will start classes this fall as a graduate student at Royal Holloway, University of London, where she has been offered a full scholarship and the chance to study with the world's leading genocide scholars.

And as the Mary Smedley Collier Distinguished Graduate, Rebecca continues the legacy of Mary Collier, Valencia's first Distinguished Graduate, who passed away in 2011. Collier, who with her husband built an Orlando auto dealership and raised four children, returned to college in her 50s, earning an A.A. at Valencia in 1982.

As the Distinguished Graduate, Rebecca will also deliver the commencement address and will receive a \$1,500 award from the Valencia Alumni Association.



Rebecca Nash

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