



I hope this newsletter finds you well and looking forward to a happy and healthy holiday season.

It is a pleasure serving as Alumni Director at Berkshire Community College, and the connections we have made—and the relationships we have built—within our alumni community have been amazing and humbling.

It is encouraging to see how you and your fellow BCC alumni have made a difference in the world, in your professions, your communities, and through your personal growth and development. Your inspiring stories are a testament to the values and education instilled in you during your time at BCC. In addition, we are grateful for your support of those students who follow in your footsteps.

In the process of recording your stories, I have felt an immense appreciation for the opportunity to revisit your BCC story, and I celebrate your experience with you. The impact of your fantastic stories extends beyond the confines of our institution. There are so many more of you that have a story to tell, and I hope you will consider reaching out. I appreciate and welcome hearing from you.

As I express my gratitude for you, it is also important for me to acknowledge the land on which we live and work; the traditional land of the Indigenous people who have been stewards of this land for countless generations. I recognize the deep and enduring connection that Indigenous communities have with this land, and I respectfully acknowledge that I work and reside on the unceded, traditional, and ancestral lands of the Muh-he-con-ne-ok. The People of the Waters that Are Never Still. Today the Muh-he-con-ne-ok reside in Wisconsin and are known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community.

As we continue our journey, let's keep the spirit of gratitude alive and strive for a future that respects, celebrates, and honors the diverse heritage that surrounds us.

Warmly,

*Caterina Penna*

Caterina Penna  
Director of Alumni Relations & Events

Si desea leer la versión en español en PDF, por favor visite [berkshirecc.edu/alumni](http://berkshirecc.edu/alumni). Si desea recibir un ejemplar impreso en español por correo, comuníquese con [cpenna@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:cpenna@berkshirecc.edu). ¡Gracias!



From top left to right: President, Melissa Myers '89; VP, Lisa Jester; Treasurer, Amy Brueckmann; Secretary, Deni Evans '95; Fadia Rostom Makdisi; Andrea Robare '99; Kathaleen Mogul; Student Representative, Michael Guertin

"I value the education I received and the doors it opened for me and for so many other students. Because of this, I want to support the amazing resource we have right here in the Berkshires and ensure the opportunity is available for future generations. I'm looking forward to working with the Alumni Association in promoting the interest of BCC, its students, the alumni, and the community."

-Lisa Jester, Alumna and VP of the Alumni Board

## INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

To strengthen our ties and to better support our students and the BCC community, we'd love to have more voices at our table. Alumni voices and perspectives result in greater impact and even more meaningful relationships. There are a lot of ways to engage with our community, and we hope you'll join us! To learn more or to get involved, please email [alumni@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:alumni@berkshirecc.edu).

## STAY CONNECTED

- @berkshireccalumni
- [alumni@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:alumni@berkshirecc.edu)
- 413-236-3071

Donate to the BCC Foundation to help support future BCC Alumni and your campus community today. Head to [berkshirecc.edu/give](http://berkshirecc.edu/give) to make a gift. Thank you!



## KEYE HOLLISTER RECEIVES THE DANIEL DILLON '62 HEART OF SERVICE ALUMNI AWARD

The BCC community was saddened to learn of Keye Hollister's sudden passing on September 22, 2023 while this publication went to press. She will be deeply missed at BCC and in the Berkshires she called home.

Keye Hollister, class of '74, together with past BCC President Jonathan Daube, created the Berkshire Community College Foundation more than 40 years ago, holding the very first meeting on September 3, 1980. That moment forever changed the lives of our students. Today, the Foundation awards scholarships totaling more than \$400,000 per year.

Keye is a proud 1974 graduate of BCC and has practiced law since 1978. As an integral part of BCC's first capital campaign, Keye helped surpass the goal by \$200,000. She also served as chair of the board of trustees. Most of all, Keye is a champion for BCC students and a passionate advocate for those who call the Berkshires home.



Presentation of award. (from left) Melissa Myers '89, Keye Hollister '62, and Caterina Penna

## ALUMNI & CAREER SERVICES

As a BCC alum, you have access to individualized career coaching. Get help with writing your resume and cover letter, preparing for interviews, exploring careers, and navigating your job search free of charge. Schedule your appointment with Career Services by scanning the QR code or visit [bit.ly/careerbcc](http://bit.ly/careerbcc).



### Additional Alumni Resources And Opportunities:

#### Career Guidance

Osher Lifelong Learning (OLLI) at BCC has a Mentoring for Success Committee, which worked with BCC students to help them achieve their academic and career goals. The Committee is excited to share that it is expanding its services to include BCC alumni.

Mentors are dedicated community members and career professionals with years of experience and success in their chosen fields, and they can offer advice and support regarding career planning and networking, as well as serve as a link to community resources. They are excited to pursue this new avenue for their program and would welcome the opportunity to discuss their services in more detail. For more information, please email [mentoring@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:mentoring@berkshirecc.edu).



Career Services Team – Charlotte Lotz (left) and Sarah Burdick (right).

#### Support Current BCC Students

If you're interested in supporting the personal and professional development of a current BCC student, please email [cpenna@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:cpenna@berkshirecc.edu). We're looking for mentors to students who may be following a similar academic or career path as yours or match you with a student who is passionate about a field of study or cause that is important to you.

Are you a TRIO alum? We are also looking for TRIO mentors, so please mention that or email [astarsja@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:astarsja@berkshirecc.edu).

#### Workforce Development and Community Education

The Workforce Development and Community Education department offers a range of personal enrichment workshops covering a variety of topics where you can express your creativity, refine a skill, or learn a new hobby. The workshops offer something for everyone and include a 50 percent discount to alumni. To learn more about personal enrichment workshops, please visit [berkshirecc.edu/workforce](http://berkshirecc.edu/workforce).

The Workforce Team is always looking for great instructors to bring new and exciting workshops to the Berkshire community! If you are interested in teaching a workshop, please contact Jen Hoffman at [jhoffman@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:jhoffman@berkshirecc.edu) or call 413.236.2122.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: CHARLES REDD '95

### DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER, BERKSHIRE HEALTH SYSTEMS

When Charles Redd was growing up in inner city Boston with his two brothers and a single mother, he would not have foreseen his career success.

"We didn't have a lot, but it never felt like we didn't have a lot. There was always food on the table. Whatever we asked for for Christmas, we got," Charles recalls. "We didn't realize how hard my mother worked to get those things. It wasn't easy, but we were pretty fortunate."

In the 1970s, Charles and his brothers joined a voluntary school desegregation program. He attended school on the South Shore in Scituate from sixth grade through high school graduation, living with a host family with nine children. "They treated me like I was their tenth child. It was just a great experience for me to really get to know people that didn't look like me," he says.

In 1985, a cousin who was "like a brother" was killed in a gang shooting. Devastated, Charles moved out of Boston to the nearby suburb of Revere, where he worked as a nursing assistant. In 1987, acting on a leap of faith, he left to move to Pittsfield, where he knew a few people. He considered going to school for respiratory therapy and visited BCC, but the idea of paying for school proved too difficult. He joined the workforce instead.

Things changed a few years later when his daughter was born, Charles says, acknowledging he "wasn't in a good place." He enrolled at BCC, starting with classes in English and chemistry. He struggled, not yet realizing that he was dyslexic.

"I didn't write well, didn't spell well. But I had this great professor, Tim Walters," Charles recalls. "I remember him sitting in front of class saying, 'I want you to know I don't give out a lot of As.' He didn't say you couldn't get an A in his class. He was telling us that if we get an A in his class, then we've earned it. I challenged myself, and he challenged me as well."

As it turns out, there were only two As in the class, and Charles earned one of them. "I went from thinking that I wasn't very smart to realizing that if I applied myself, I could accomplish something."

Walters, recognizing Charles' talent, submitted one of Charles' papers to the Berkshire Eagle. "Why Was I Born Black?" was published in January 1990. The story described the struggles Charles endured as a young child and the internal struggles that continued into adulthood.

Keith Pryor, then senior vice president at Berkshire Health Systems (BHS), stopped him in the hallway. "He told me what the story meant to him. I think that was the catalyst to get me to start at BCC."

Eventually entering the nursing program in 1993, Charles was awarded several scholarships, and his former mother-in-law helped him with tuition, secretly paying for his last semester. "It was only \$250, but people don't understand that \$250 was a lot of money in 1995 when you could barely rub two nickels together," Charles says.



The outpouring of support from family and BCC faculty changed Charles. "I worked hard. My work ethic was different, because I knew if I failed, it was going to set me back significantly," he says. In his last semester, while working two jobs, he needed 14 credits to graduate. BCC allowed him to do an audit-style communications class because there wasn't a class that fit in his schedule.

"They made it work for me," Charles says. "I tell people all the time that I didn't make it alone. People from all walks of life helped me to be successful. I graduated in 1995 with honors. I never, ever thought I would do that."

As the first DEI Officer at BHS, a position he has held since August 2022, Charles is focused in his mission. "It's about the health of the community," he says. "We started talking about maternal health, like the study about Black women being three to five times more likely to die from pregnancy. About how a lot of African American men weren't getting kidney transplants. And so those types of conversations were happening, and it shifted to health of the community and health equity."

These days, Charles is a busy healthcare executive, but he hasn't lost sight of what he holds most dear. "Being able to care for yourself, being able to take care of your family, being successful, being more than anybody ever thought you could be — there is no greater gift," he says. "When you create leaders, you create people that bring value to their community."

Charles Redd has worked in nursing positions of increasing responsibility for nearly three decades, including at Baystate Medical Center and Fairview Hospital, before joining Berkshire Health Systems as DEI Officer. He earned an associate degree in nursing from BCC in 1995, a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from Elms College in 2014 and a master's degree in healthcare administration from Southern New Hampshire University in 2020.



Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service 2023 – BCC staff with Dennis Powell, NAACP Berkshire County Branch President and Charles Redd.



# YOUR STORY IS OUR STORY. OUR STORY IS YOUR STORY.

PATRICIA (DEVERGILIO) KELLAR '96

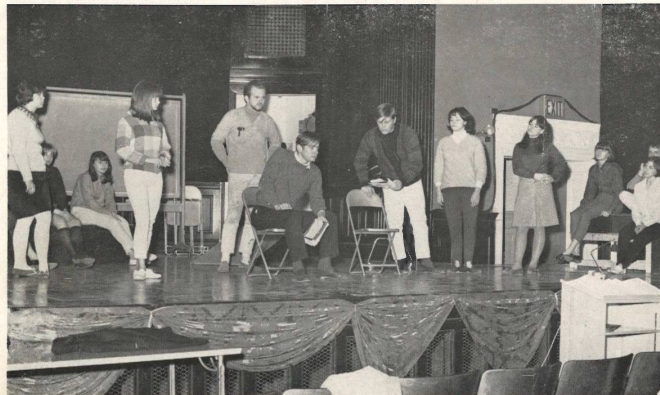


## The Falcon's Nest

Vol. V Issue II BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF PITTSFIELD NOVEMBER 22, 1965

A Lerner & Lowe Musical

### 'Paint Your Wagon' Opens Four Day Run Thursday



The Drama Club Rehearses for its Forthcoming Production.

By Manly Garner

Theatrical spirit is reaching production heights—*Paint Your Wagon* is on its way.

After many weeks of scene construction, staging, and singing, the curtain will rise this Thursday to display the cumulative accomplishments of a number of

### Junior Collegians To Begin Second Year

By Carol Tole

The Berkshire Community College Junior Collegians, an extracurricular organization dedicated to group singing, is a medium for both public performance and high caliber

### Dr. Max Lerner To Speak Next Month

By Rosemary Toole

On December 6th, Berkshire Community College will be host to the celebrated columnist, educator, and international affairs expert, Dr. Max Lerner. It is with pride that President O'Connell presents to the students of B.C.C., and to the interested public, as part of the President's Hour program a lecturer of such caliber.

Dr. Lerner, born in Minsk, Russia in 1902, came to the United States in 1907. He was educated at Yale University and studied at the Yale law school. He received his Masters degree at Washington University in 1925, and his Doctorate from The Robert Brookings Graduate School of Economics and Government in 1927.

Dr. Lerner taught social science at Sarah Lawrence College, lectured in Government at Harvard University, served as chairman of faculty at Wellesley College Summer Institute, and, for five years, was professor of Political Science at Williams College. He is presently teaching at both Brandeis and the New School for Social Research in New York City.

Along with his educational commitments, Dr. Lerner has served as Director of the Consumer's Division of the National Emergency Council under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He was editor of *The Nation* for two years and was also an editorial writer for "PM", and the *New York Star* for five years. He

professor. This was financed under the terms of a grant from the Ford foundation, as was a year of study and research in Europe.

Among the many books Dr. Lerner has authored are: *It's Later Than You Think, Ideas are Weapons, The Mind and Faith of Justice Holmes, Actions and Passions, and America as a Civilization*. His latest book, *The Age of Overkill*, deals with various problems in modern America, as reflected by the acceptance of such a word as "overkill." An anthology of his newspaper articles has been printed under the title, *The Unfinished Country*.

We welcome Dr. Max Lerner to Berkshire Community College as a knowing lecturer on American life. The title of his lecture is "Six Revolutions in American Life." Considering Dr. Lerner's erudite background, we know that the evening of December sixth will be an evening well spent for those fortunate enough to attend.

Sometimes, the second time is a charm.

When Pittsfield native Patricia Kellar graduated high school in 1964, she immediately enrolled at BCC. With plans to be a secretary, she took courses in the Executive Secretarial program, but she also found herself busy with extracurricular activities. She joined a sorority, worked out at the gym, took dance classes and dabbled in theater.

"The play, *Paint Your Wagon*, was the highlight of my time at BCC," says Patty, who also recalls a BCC winter weekend at Eastover, then a ski resort and retreat center in Lenox.

She completed her first year, and then the first semester of her second year. That's when she learned GE was recruiting employees. Patty took the secretarial test at GE and was hired, leaving her degree unfinished.

After a 10-year career at GE, she met her now-husband, George Kellar, on a ski trip. Even though he had grown up in Pittsfield and also worked at GE, they had never met. Ironically, he attended seventh grade on the original BCC campus, when his junior high school shared space there. Life magazine, interested in covering the first community college in Massachusetts, took a picture of the seventh graders and college students together. He's in that picture.

After her second son was born, Patty decided to be a stay-at-home mother. She loved it, but after many years, she felt the need to return to BCC to finish what she'd started.

"When I mentioned to George that I wanted to complete my degree, he said, 'Go for it!' recalls Patty, who was thrilled to find that BCC took all of her original college credits, leaving her with only a handful of courses to take to finish her degree.

"I loved it when I went back. I was glad to be there, and BCC was very welcoming to me," she says. "I wasn't a great student in the earlier years at BCC, but I graduated with all A's and was awarded Most Outstanding Office Administration student. I was proud of that." When she earned her degree in 1996, she took a temporary job with GE Plastics — but after just six months on the job, she found out she was going to be a grandmother. She chose to devote herself full-time to caring for her grandson and for her aging parents.

Recently, Patty and her family were invited to BCC for a tour and demo of the new Makers Space. She hadn't been back to campus since the 1990s, but what she saw made her excited about the prospect of her grandchildren attending BCC.

"It's the most perfect place to start at any age, because there's so much now, especially all the STEM offerings," Patty says. "And now it really looks like a college campus, because everything is connected. Before, you had to go outside to go to all the different buildings. I'm very impressed." Patty's grandchildren, now attending high school and middle school, are interested in STEM and left the tour impressed with the resources and opportunities at BCC.

"It's just such a good way to transition. You're not far away from home, but you are in a college environment," she says.

Since reconnecting with BCC, Patty has been delighted to take advantage of the plethora of alumni offerings, from Canyon Ranch experiences to pasta and bread making classes, the annual dinner and more.

Now married almost 46 years, Patty is content. "George and I are enjoying life right now, taking care of our youngest grandkids and appreciating all the cultural events Berkshire County has to offer," she says. "BCC is a big part of that. It's a gem in our own backyard."



(top) Patty (DeVergilio) Kellar (left) and Sherry Fresia (right) prepare for "Paint Your Wagon."

(bottom left) Students performing "Paint Your Wagon."

(bottom right) BCC Winter Weekend at Eastover in the Tally Hoe Barn







Tarcisio "Taz" Ramos dos Santos '18 at the BCC Book House, displaying his first book *QUINHO - A Child Out of This World*.

## ALUMNI IN THE ARTS

Tarcisio "Taz" Ramos dos Santos '18 held a performative lecture and workshop, "Traditional Brazilian Musical Instruments," on Friday, November 3 at BCC. The lecture focused on Brazil's musical diversity and its unique instruments, as well as their cultural and historical significance. An interactive samba workshop with drumming concluded the event.

Tarcisio "Taz" Ramos dos Santos, a native of Brazil, became an American citizen six years ago. He has resided in the United States for 11 years, currently living in Becket.

"All my family is back in Brazil, and none of them are able to come to visit me because of financial circumstances," says Taz, who is the father of 19-year-old girl/boy twins named Tarciany and Thayson. He became a father at just 16 years old, which he calls "a very tough but also transformative experience. It helped to shape who I am today."

When Taz came to the United States and settled in Amherst, he rode his bike to the International Language Institute in Northampton to take classes.

"It gave me a very good foundation because I didn't speak any English, so I had to learn from scratch," he says.

That foundation gave Taz the confidence to enroll at BCC. In a painting class, he created illustrations for a book he had already written, eventually publishing it in Brazil. He wants to do a mini book tour in the Berkshires.

Taz graduated BCC in 2018 with an associate degree in liberal arts, continuing on to MCLA to earn a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies with a minor in mathematics. Today, he works with autistic individuals, providing them with creative opportunities including music, hiking and gardening.

A man of many interests, Taz was selected to participate in a televised survival show called "Alone," now airing on the History Channel. He applied to be on the show when he realized his background would be a perfect fit.

"I grew up for the best part of eight years with no electricity and no running water," says Taz, who is the oldest of five children.

But he doesn't have to be doing anything sensationalist like starring in a reality show to find a purpose.

"I'm in the midst of so many different things that are meaningful. For me, it's about having a place in your community," Taz says.



To read Taz's full story, visit [www.berkshirecc.edu/alumnispotlight](http://www.berkshirecc.edu/alumnispotlight).

SUPPORT THE ELEANORE VELEZ SCHOLARSHIP:



**LAURA CABRERA | MATT CUSSON '98 | BILLY KEANE  
CHANTELL MCCULLOCH | TARCISIO "TAZ" RAMOS DOS SANTOS '18  
ANDY WRBA | DAVE BROWN | GINA COLEMAN | SETH FLEISCHMANN | AND MORE**

**NOVEMBER 29, 2023 | 7:00 PM**  
**ROBERT BOLAND THEATER | BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**RESERVE TICKETS AT [BERKSHIRECC.EDU/MUSIC-FEST](http://BERKSHIRECC.EDU/MUSIC-FEST)**

Proceeds will support students who are ineligible for federal aid due to their citizenship status. This includes students who are undocumented, immigrants, refugees, or those with J1 visas. Tickets are free but must be reserved and donations are accepted.

BCC is committed to providing universal access to all our events. Please email [cpenna@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:cpenna@berkshirecc.edu) or call 413-236-3071 to request disability accommodations.







# **BCC ALUMNI & FRIENDS NEWS 2023**

## **FALCONS FOR LIFE.**

Alumni Music Fest Performers (featured left to right) Matt Cusson '98, Laura Cabrera, Andy Wrba, Chantell McCulloch, Gina Coleman, Billy Keane, and Dan Brown.