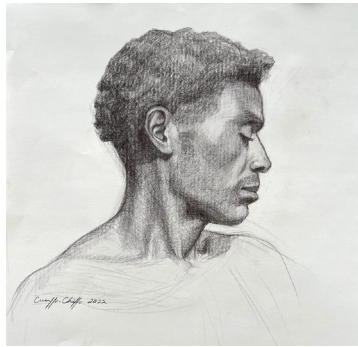


# The College Hill News

FALL 2022

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County  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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## Degree UP: More Than A Tutoring Program

By Christopher Arnold  
College Hill Writer

A student at Sussex Community College (SCCC) in Newton has just broken his laptop a day before his midterm paper. Frantically thinking that he is not going to get his assignment in, he walks into the E building and inside the Degree UP office he discovers he is able to complete his paper inside the free computer lab.

This is just one of the many different ways Degree UP at SCCC has been a great instrument to help students achieve success. A unique student-based program, Degree UP for the past eight years has helped students at SCCC tackle real life and academic issues. From providing tutoring in any subject to supplying students with food and groceries, Degree UP is an open-arm community that strives to build a solid foundation for students' academic and personal success.

"Our mission is to help build a foundation for students and bridge the gap between academic and personal success," stated Skylar-Jean Carrol, coordinator of Degree UP.

The program is student based, where students help other students. This makes Degree UP totally unique as student inclusivity is what makes the program. Rather than a professor helping a student on a math assignment, another student will help guide said student through his or her assignment. Not only does this benefit both students but it also helps build relationships and networks through SCCC.

Other than tutoring, Degree UP also offers a free computer lab that is open during the day for those students who have no laptops or internet access. Additionally, provided are study workshops for students that need study guidance. The computer lab is a quiet area where students can come during the day to work on assignments, print papers and study.

A student can schedule a tutoring session by emailing Degree UP, but computer labs and workshops are open to all students with no appointment needed. Study workshops are also hosted by Dr. Robin Nazzario to provide assistance and guidance on how to study. Carrol stated, "for most students it's not whether or not they are motivated to study. It's the fact that some students just don't know how to study or study optimally."

Like all tutoring programs Degree UP provides academic support for students but what separates the program from the rest, is its support for the personal success of students at SCCC. Academic support in schools is needed of course, but it is hard for a student to be academically successful if personal needs are not met. This is where Degree UP becomes more than just a tutoring program. **(cont'd on next page)**



## Sussex County Community College Presents Fall Play "Everybody"

By Hailey Read  
College Hill Writer



Alpha Arts Institute at Sussex County Community College in Newton took its audience on a journey of a lifetime in the fall production of "Everybody" by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins.

The story "Everybody" is a modern take on the 15th century morality play, "Everyman." The comedic-drama follows the cast as they journey to find life's greatest mystery—the meaning of living.

The Alpha Arts Institute at Sussex County Community College provides the campus and greater community with quality exhibitions, performances and events in the visual, theater arts and music arts from emerging and established artists, faculty, students, alumni and community members to foster an inspiring environment of creativity and intellectual growth.

Directed by Professor Allison Ognibene, "Everybody" ran Nov. 10 through Nov. 12, at 7:30 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center with about 200 people in attendance.

"During the pandemic, I read an extremely timely play, "Everybody," even though it was written two years prior to Covid-19," remarked Ognibene, the coordinator of theater at SCCC. "When the 15th century play "Everyman" was written, it was in response to the bubonic plague. Here we were globally sitting at home for almost two years questioning our fates -- will we get covid -- will we live -- will there be any sense of normalcy again? There was no question what play I was going to direct when the college fully reopened the theater in the Fall 2022. It was serendipity in the most startling way."

Morgan Burke of Vernon, a freshman at SCCC, played a major role in the production, both on stage and behind the scenes. Burke played the character Love, as well as lent a hand in building the entire set.

"Being involved with the play at the college, I feel like I've gained a lot of confidence," says Burke. "I have expanded my horizons by trying something I never thought I could do. I stepped out of my comfort zone, and it [was] a lot of fun. A key takeaway is that you can do anything that you put your mind to."

Other cast members, besides Burke, included: Isabella Cruz of Vernon, Nicolas Galloza of Hopatcong, Chris Flatt of Hamburg, Alexis Borovic of Sussex, Aurelia Shanga of Mount Olive, Colin O'Sullivan of Hopatcong, Tyler Charters of Vernon, Samantha Wolujczyk of Sussex, Monica Salazar of Sussex, Jake Jackson of Washington and Shannon Burke of Vernon.

The production team includes: Stage Manager Lisa Geerhart of Newton; Assistant Stage Manager Emma Hischak of Sparta; Technical Director Tim O'Connor of Dingmans Ferry, Pa.; Lighting Designer Anthony Guerra of Milford, Pa.; Property Master Jess Dooley of Hopatcong; Costume Masters Monica Salazar of Sussex and Natalie Tognetti of Newton; Backstage Crew Catarina Cruz of Vernon and Olivia Fisher of Newton; Assistant to the Director Dana Nigro of Stillwater; and Sound Operator Jake Jackson of Washington. Set construction was done by Wally Stanek of Byram and William Ognibene of Sparta.

To audition or get involved in the spring production, contact Ognibene at [aognibene@sussex.edu](mailto:aognibene@sussex.edu).



**(cont'd from front page)** Food drives are held every Wednesday for students who may not be able to afford groceries; also snacks are provided throughout the school day inside the Degree UP office. Working with Sussex Hunger Coalition and other local supermarkets, any student can come to the food drive and pick up fresh produce and other groceries.

“It is hard for a student to focus on doing good in school when they are worried about when their next meal will be,” stated Carrol. “Helping students with personal needs like that is just as important as studying.”

Degree UP and Norwescap don't just hold food drives though. They have a plethora of other programs that help give back to the students of SCCC. Loan/saving programs provide small loans to assist working individuals maintain employment, supportive housing can help provide homes to students who are homeless, and energy assistance and weatherization can help pay heating and cooling costs.

Also provided is WIC which offers new mothers healthy foods along with health screenings, breastfeeding education and support. These may be problems SCCC students are faced with that are overlooked and if basic living needs are not met, how could a student possibly be successful academically?

Degree UP is aware of the socioeconomic and differences that come with a diverse campus such as SCCC. Students at SCCC come from different countries, states, and counties and it is important to recognize it. Degree UP does consider the differences between every student on campus and aims to give any student a strong foundation to be successful.

“A kid that comes from the inner city of Baltimore, Md. is going to have a different lifestyle and education than a kid from Sparta, N.J.,” stated Carrol. “It's about giving that inner city kid the same foundation to success as somebody local to SCCC.”



## Faculty Expo Presents Creativity and Professionalism

**By Robin Gindhart**  
College Hill Writer

The Faculty Expo of the fall 2022 semester at Sussex County Community College in Newton was the first faculty-based expo since the pandemic and its success plays a part in the future of the art program.

This exhibition that was shown from Sept. 23 to Nov. 4 succeeded at doing two jobs at once: Showing the behind-the-scenes professional lives of faculty and presenting a professional presentation of their finished works for the students. It showcased the creative minds of 10 art professors with all different fields of expertise.

Its success also contributes to what will come next for the future of art expos at SCCC. A faculty type photography expo by Joseph Guerriero based in Cuba was set to be held from Nov. 11 to Jan. 23. There will also be a graphic design expo planned for the spring semester and an alumni expo sometime after that.

Daniel Cosentino, the coordinator for the Visual and Performing Arts, expresses how this expo made the campus more lively/ enhanced creativity when he said, “that’s definitely our aim,” and “the creative spirit should be alive, present and visible at universities and colleges.”

Cosentino says, “I can feel it among students, faculty and staff that there’s a buzz about it.” The opening event was the first sign of the success this expo would go on to have when 200-250 people attended to show their support/interest.

It contained a diverse set of works with several different forms of art including photography, ink on canvas, oil painting, graphic art, fashion and more.

The artists were Cosentino, Janet Cunniffe-Chieffo, Staci Cocuzza, Michael Hughes, Anita Collins, James E. Jeffreys, Joseph Guerriero, Denise Sivulich, Taylor Cacici and Renee Collins. It was located in Gallery C, across the courtyard from the student center.

Janet Cunniffe-Chieffo, an adjunct professor of Fine Art who has also been a professional artist for more than 20 years, expresses the creative meaning behind some of her works, which mostly consist of portrait oil paintings.

In “Marla,” Chieffo says, “I chose to use underlighting to accentuate the mood. The dramatic light and shadow play a particularly important part in this painting as I strived to capture her sensuality and power with strong use of color and brushwork.” This piece won an award for outstanding portraiture and was published in “The Artist’s” magazine.

She goes on to describe another one, “The Turquoise Sari” which is “about a young woman who traveled to India to find her passion in making tea. The beautiful colored sari wraps around her portrait representing a culture she embraced in search for her passion.”

For Cosentino, who is also an art professor, his artwork shown in this expo consists mainly of photographs, as well as a couple of ink on canvases.

“Because I’m teaching photography classes, it gives the public and the students a chance to see some photographic processes,” says Cosentino, while his ink on canvases are “about communication and language, but they raise some of the same questions as photographic portraits do.” All of his pieces are also from the 10 years he spent living in the Balkans, except for the colored one that shows a Balkan artist in Central Park.

“Driton,” Cosentino’s largest piece in this expo, is named after the artist seen in it with the city in the background, so “you can see this new urbanization in this partially broken landscape which is so common in the Balkans,” according to Cosentino.

Another artist, Taylor Cacici describes his artwork as being “about mental health, morality and catharsis” and it’s considered expressive realism.

“I often use myself as reference,” says Cacici. “Everywhere I go, there I am. It documents a discomfort and is rendered in a way to be indicative of this. Quick and erratic marks provide movement in a static image.”

Staci Cocuzza, who has been a designer in the fashion industry for more than 15 years, has pieces that are “about reworking and reimagining vintage clothing and heirloom textiles to create wearable art,” she says.

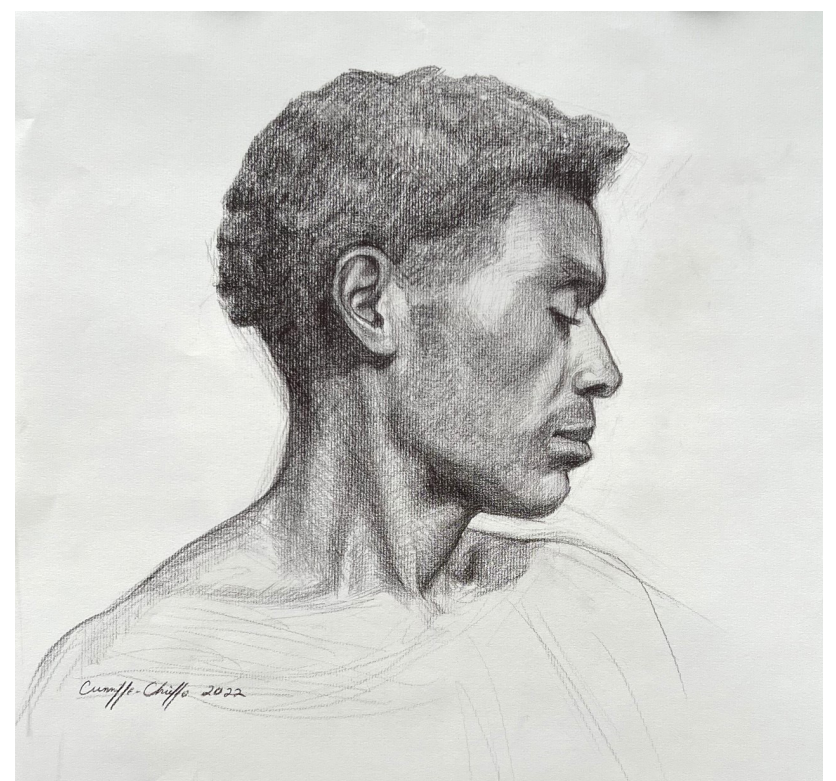
Her true creativity is seen when she says, “the inspiration around my work is the evolution of reduce, reuse, recycle. I think reimagine needs to be a part of the conversation as well, taking something that may have been used one way, and reusing it in an unexpected way.”

For Michael Hughes, an artist for about 65 years, his pieces within this expo were all made within a digital format using a lot of his own photographs and drawings.

“Most of my work deals with a fascination bordering on obsession with popular culture,” Hughes says, and a couple of his pieces, “Sunday Funnies” and “Arcade,” have to do with his memory images from his past.

“When I was much (MUCH) younger spreading out the newspaper comics on the floor was a Sunday morning ritual,” says Hughes. “Sunday Funnies” recaptures this experience.”

For the future, The Alpha Arts Institute is a larger concept that has to do with what’s yet to come for these types of art expos. According to Cosentino, this new concept will allow for the art program at SCCC to expand out to the community and other professionals; it has the potential to draw other artists for residency. His bold vision for developing this consists of five points: The art expos such as the Faculty Expo; theater shows; lecture series that start in December; a film festival and a festival of arts that are both set to be held in May.





# New Rain Garden Serves as Versatile Benefit

By Robin Gindhart  
College Hill Writer

While students are soaking up wisdom inside their buildings and around campus, the new rain garden at Sussex County Community College in Newton is soaking up stormwater runoff which helps reduce 80% to 90% of pollutants.

Located at the top of campus, the new rain garden may be easy to miss for some, but after digging, it's clear that it has a lot more to it than what meets the eye.

The new rain garden that was installed during the fall semester of 2021 at Sussex County Community College is multi-functional in how it benefits the environment in a variety of ways, beautifies the campus and provides an educational opportunity for students.

Located next to the rain garden, its official sign explains that "when stormwater runoff from a paved parking lot, rooftop, or compacted lawn flows into a rain garden, the water slowly soaks into the soil and replenishes groundwater, instead of flowing into the storm drain." It can capture and store the water before it's contaminated by pollutants, such as motor oil from the parking lot, which helps keep the local water stream clean. It manages 197,103 gallons of stormwater per year and is a total of 1,270 square feet. There is one cell on each side of the sidewalk; one cell is 525 square feet and the other is 745 square feet.

"SCCC is the headwaters of the Paulins Kill River, so that means we're at the beginning of that, so it's important for us to care about the watershed," says Erin Shroll, Agricultural Business & Horticultural Science program supervisor. Along with that, this rain garden also serves as a wildlife habitat for birds, bees and butterflies and helps control flooding.

"The reason it would be considered more of a demonstration garden I would say is because of where it's located," Shroll says.

The rain garden is located on the sidewalk coming into the main (lower) campus from Lot 1. This active spot makes it easy to see when students walk through it and for professors, such as Shroll, to bring their classes to if they wish. This provides a way for students to learn about storm water management and to be actively engaged in this type of project work.

Seven students of professor Shroll helped to first put in the plants for the rain garden with her assistance. Those students have since graduated from SCCC and now her current students continuously help maintain these plants. There are three zones within this garden that each consist of their own plants, the top being the driest and the bottom being the wettest. The plants consist of shrubs and perennials that are all native to New Jersey: Tussock sedge, purple love grass, blue flag, fragrant sumac, sweet pepperbush, swamp milkweed and Juncus/rush.



This location was also chosen because "there was evidence of erosion and areas where the water would come down quickly during a heavy rainstorm," says Kristen Rogers, Watershed Education and Outreach specialist of the SCMUA-Walkkill River Watershed Management Group.

Rogers' job makes her an expert in all things protecting the watersheds and as Shroll puts it, she is "the woman responsible for initiating the rain garden installation." Rogers explains how this rain garden was a part of her big vision for Newton to install stormwater management projects in all of the schools through a grant she wrote called the "K-College Initiative."

The funding for this specific garden was provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Overall, this project included four organizations: The SCCC Facilities team and Agriculture and Horticultural programs; the SCMUA-Walkkill River Watershed Management Group; Rutgers Waters Resources Program; and the Newton Department of Public Works (DPW).

Each of these organizations played a unique role in the development of the rain garden. The SCMUA led the project and employed grant funding; Rutgers provided the design plans and engineering oversight; and the DPW excavated the garden and repaired the sidewalk as an in-kind donation.

The addition of this rain garden shows how the campus has become more environmentally conscientious in recent years and wants to be even more so in the future. In fact, there is another rain garden behind the E Building that was installed at the same time and is much bigger, according to Shroll, so there's currently a total of two rain gardens on campus.

Showing even more hope for the future, Rogers says, "We've been in conversation with different people in the administration at the college to try to install porous asphalt, which is a type of parking lot that would allow the water to soak through to the soil underneath."

# Writers Flock to New SCCC Creative Writing Club

By Hailey Read  
College Hill Writer



Faculty, students and lovers of literature combined their efforts this fall semester to introduce a new club to the Sussex County Community College (SCCC) student body: The Creative Writing Club (CWC).

The club is free to join for any faculty, students and community members. Throughout a semester, members share at least one creative written work and are encouraged to give feedback to three or more works of other club members throughout a semester. Written works may include poetry, prose, songs, fiction writing, non-fiction writing, screenplays and even annotations.

The club had its first meeting with the Student Government Association on November 3, which was conducted by the SGA and the CWC Co-Advisors Jason Boehm and Olivia Maikisch, two faculty members at SCCC.

In the meeting, the new club members introduced themselves and were recognized by the SGA. A total of ten members were present and confirmed. Topics reviewed included acquiring funds, fundraising, future meetings and trips.

Elected officials for the CWC were also announced, with Angelina Hofheinz as president, Nadeschka Gaberell as vice president, James (Jim) Prior as treasurer, and Olivia O'Brien as secretary. Hofheinz discussed its club bylaws, its goals in creating the club and how future meetings would be held.

The idea to create the club was initially introduced to the co-advisors by Hofheinz, who is a sophomore student at SCCC. The remainder of the CWC board are all standing freshmen of the college.

"I definitely think the school needed this club," says Hofheinz. "There is this great advantage that if you bring something creative, and other people do the same creative thing, then you can exchange helpful ideas and strategies. You can inspire [each other], you help each other, you can motivate each other, and you can hold each other accountable to keep working on your projects and not procrastinate."

The club was designed as an avenue for artistic expression, but also as a resource to aid in the collective mental health of the student body. The club board specified that it would be accepting of all types of subject matter that members bring in, as they fall into the SCCC safety and health guidelines.

"I think the Creative Writing Club will give students the opportunity to explore, develop, and share their writing and ideas in a non-judgmental, supportive environment," comments Maikisch, who also serves as coordinator of the SCCC Writing Center. "For many people, creative writing is something that they tend to do on their own, but by collaborating with other like-minded writers, Creative Writing Club can become a highly generative space for our students here."

The club continues to accept new members and holds in-person and virtual meetings to accommodate all types of students and community members. It will run throughout the remainder of the 2022-2023 school year and anticipates continuing for years to come.

For more information, contact Hofheinz at [ahofheinz@student.sussex.edu](mailto:ahofheinz@student.sussex.edu), or co-advisors Boehm and Maikisch at [jboehm@sussex.edu](mailto:jboehm@sussex.edu).







## SPORTS NEWS



# Skylanders Football Strives for Excellence

By Christopher Arnold  
College Hill Writer

Sussex Community College (SCCC) in Newton, is home to the only junior college football team in New Jersey.

With this newest sports team added to SCCC, young adults in and around the state have an opportunity that was not as accessible to them before.

The football team provides a great opportunity for student athletes who may not have had the grades nor money to go to a four-year university. It also gives student athletes in N.J. who were not thinking about going to college a chance to earn their associates degree while still playing football.

"It's great for the state and community and we have so many kids who are here for different reasons," said SCCC Head Football Coach Todd Poltersdorf. "Some kids may be behind academically but are great athletically, and other kids may just need a year or two to develop as athletes."

Being such a new program can be challenging, but the Skylanders have been competitive the past two years. Going 4-6 this year, 3-5 in 2021, and 1-3 in the inaugural season, the Skylanders continue to improve every year.

Poltersdorf said, "I don't count our first season as a program because it was so short due to covid restrictions during that time. I said the program needed three years until we really start winning and being successful and I'm happy with the direction the program is headed towards."

When asked about the biggest change from last year to this year Poltersdorf said, "We certainly have better athletes than last year but most importantly we have better students on this year's team as well. When I know the team will take care of their academics it makes coaching a little easier."

Although this season has been the team's best it was marked by struggle in the beginning of the year as the team started 0-3. The team may have missed some opportunities in the first three games but showed resilience, rattling off four wins in the last seven games. The team's original goal was to have a positive record. Falling just short however, this is something the team looks to learn from.

"I saw us going 6-4, possibly 7-3 in the beginning of the year," said Poltersdorf. "We missed key opportunities early in the season which cost us games, but we played great football towards the end. We beat a great Monroe team for instance, then we lost to Thaddeous Stevens, a very beatable opponent."

Win or lose however the Skylanders played hard week in and week out. No matter the outcome of the game the team is described as being able to leave the past behind and focus for its next opponent. Relentless is how the team is described which can be good or bad in some cases.

"The best quality of the team is their ability to move on from last week, win or lose," Poltersdorf said. They don't dwell on wins or losses, they come to practice ready to get better and focus on the opponent we have that week. I would describe the team as relentless, they can be relentless towards each other at times, but they work hard and play hard," said Poltersdorf.

The football team, although new to SCCC, looks to expand its recruiting process and acquire not just athletes but student athletes who want to not just play football but get an education while doing it. Being great on the gridiron is not the sole objective for the team nor the coaches, however. Both players and coaches alike strive for academic excellence just as they do athletic greatness.

"Most people on the team take academics very seriously because we know that we need at least a 2.0 GPA to transfer to a four-year school," said freshman linebacker Stephen Jones. "I personally take academics seriously because I don't want to limit my opportunities. If I can meet the academic standards for every school in the country, I will have an endless amount of opportunities beyond SCCC."

Poltersdorf said, "my biggest goal for my players as a coach is to help them understand the value of their education. I take more pride in a player succeeding in the classroom who has never done well in school, than seeing a player I know is a good athlete score touchdowns on Saturdays. Football is temporary, but nobody can take away your diploma, no one can take your education from you."

