

FALL 2005 / WINTER 2006

# FOCUS

NTID

National Technical Institute for the Deaf • Rochester Institute of Technology



Learning for Life



# Presidential Visit

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**President Bill Clinton** visited RIT in December as the guest of B. Thomas Golisano, RIT trustee and founder of RIT's B. Thomas Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences. Clinton toured the college, including the NTID Information and Computing Studies support lab where he met some of RIT's deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Among them was Dae-Kun Kim, of Fremont, Calif., pictured here showing Clinton a photo Kim took of himself with the president.

While speaking to RIT students, faculty, staff, and invited guests, Clinton referenced RIT's National Technical Institute for the Deaf and the large deaf and hard-of-hearing student population, saying "I think the fact that you have all these hearing-impaired people here who are doing terrifically well at school and are going to get jobs is a classic example of what America can do. You're basically saying that it's wrong to waste anybody's brain power. It's wrong to deny anyone the chance to live up to their full potential. And if you do it, your country pays a price. If you have a chance to do public good as private citizens, this school proves it."

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### ABOUT THE COVER

The education that students receive at RIT/NTID, both in and out of the classroom, provides a strong foundation for success throughout their lives. This issue of *FOCUS* highlights some of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni whose experiences demonstrate that an RIT education truly is learning for life.

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# FOCUS

NTID

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## The Changing Face of Education

When I attended a mainstream school years ago, access services as we know them today didn't exist. Like many students of my generation, I compensated for my hearing loss by sitting in the front of the room, getting notes from classmates, meeting with my teachers after class, and spending long hours re-reading textbooks and re-writing my notes to keep up.

Arriving at NTID for a teaching job in 1970, I couldn't believe the array of student-centered services available at this brand new institution. Interpreters and notetakers in classes, audiologists, dorm rooms with visual doorbells, and classrooms designed specifically for deaf students—it was all so innovative and tailor-made to fit the needs of the student population, making academic success a realistic and attainable goal.

After nearly 40 years, NTID's goals for its students haven't changed. We still want students to get the best technological education possible. We still want them to be challenged in their classes and enthusiastic about their extracurricular activities outside of class. We still want them to leave here ready for a successful career.

The careers students are choosing certainly have changed over the years. Yesterday's academic programs in electronics and bookkeeping have been replaced with offerings in Digital Imaging and Publishing,

Applied Computer Technology, and Automation Technologies—Robotics. And how we prepare students for those careers has changed as well.

Technology plays a far bigger role, both in the academic and social lives of today's students. They live in wireless residence halls, carry handheld pagers, use video relay services to make phone calls, and go to classes in lecture halls filled with high-tech computers. Technology has made their world more accessible than ever before, and their opportunities remain larger than life.

This issue of *FOCUS* describes some of the ways that NTID is meeting the changing needs of our student population. You'll also read about several of our outstanding students, faculty/staff members, and alumni.

It's hard to know what the NTID of tomorrow will look like for future students, and what programs those students will be interested in studying. Many probably haven't even been invented yet. But one thing is certain... NTID will still be here, helping prepare students for the world—and perhaps the universe—in which they will live.

*Alan Demwitz*



# Preparing Students for Co-op

by Kathy A. Johncox



**Practice, practice, practice** Brenda Koumphol, left, from Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, a first-year student in NTID's Accounting Technology program, participates in a practice job interview videotaped in one of NTID's television studios. A staff volunteer serves as the interviewer, and Brenda uses an interpreter during this practice session as she may do in a real job interview. She will review the videotape with her NCE employment advisor to evaluate her interview skills.

The Job Search. It's what most college students want and need to think about, but maybe "not just yet." The fact is, however, that in 2006, jobs are hard to find, and college graduates face a tough market under the best of circumstances. Deaf and hard-of-hearing students face an additional employment challenge as employers may be cautious about hiring them because they believe communication may be difficult.

Employment professionals in the NTID Center on Employment (NCE) believe that two strategies can help change both the students' think-about-it-tomorrow attitude and the possible mindset of some employers—student preparation and employer education.

"We know from experience that students are most successful when they are engaged in an activity over time, rather than required to be successful to a deadline," says Dr. Allen Vaala,

NCE director. "That's why our strategy is to engage students throughout their time here, and help them always to be thinking about why they are here—to get co-ops and jobs."

## Student Preparation

Most students' first job search involves looking for a cooperative work experience, or co-op, which is required for most majors at RIT/NTID. The 10- or 20-week co-op occurs in a real-world workplace and helps students use their training, knowledge, and developing skills to gain hands-on experience that can give them an edge in their job search after graduation.

Most students start their relationship with NCE as second-year students with a required Job Search class that is taught by NCE staff along with a faculty member. These teachers encourage the students to seek opportunities in their fields of study while developing

interviewing and other job preparation skills. Part of the class includes resume writing, getting help with cover letters, and completing job applications. NCE has a special Student Services Team, which provides creative ways to encourage students to prepare for this first job-seeking effort.

"We are giving them 'thought-ware,'" says Vaala, "an industry term that means focusing your mind on the things that matter and the actions that you need to be successful."

Different workshops give students instruction and practice in interviewing and making contact with potential employers. And students can participate in a practice job interview conducted by hearing faculty, staff, and community members who volunteer to participate in a simulated real-world job interview situation. The interviews are videotaped and then critiqued jointly by the Job Search instructor and the student.

Available technology, including videoconferencing, allows students to schedule realtime job interviews with employers all over the U.S. from a specially equipped conference room at RIT/NTID. NCE also arranges for on-site employer interviews in the winter and spring quarters.

“What helped me the most,” says Aneesha Lane, a third-year student in Graphic Design from East Orange, N.J., “was meeting with Kathleen Dollinger-Meyer, my employment advisor. She gave me so much help and advice, and I kept her updated, so she knew how to help me.”

Aneesha’s recent co-op doing design work at a newspaper, the *Indianapolis Star*, gave her experience working both independently and with a team in a fast-paced publishing environment.

And then there’s the NTID Job Fair, sponsored jointly by NCE and the New York State Department of Labor.

Josh Schwartz has his master’s degree in Human Resource Development from RIT, and is currently an intern working in human resources at the Government Printing Office in Washington, D.C.

“I used most of the services provided by NCE,” Josh says. “For me, the most effective was the Job Fair because there are so many opportunities for employers to meet deaf and hard-of-hearing students and for those students to know how to interact with employers.

“My NCE advisor, Linda Iacelli, arranged for me to do an interview using videoconferencing. I was on campus, and I could see the interviewers in D.C., and they could see me and ask me questions. I feel that is one of the reasons why they were comfortable hiring me because they could see me and hear me at the same time. I think the up-to-date technology on campus is amazing because it allows deaf and hard-of-hearing students and prospective employers to communicate without any hassles.”

“I would tell other students that you may think you can do a good job search on your own, but it’s hard to do it without experience,” says Aneesha. “Once you have the experience, then you can do it on your own. And after

you get the help from NCE services, you can’t sit back and put up your feet and wait for them to carry the ball. It’s your responsibility to use the resources they give you to reach your goal.”

### Employer Education

“The employer development and education component of NCE sends staff and faculty all over the country to talk to employers about the caliber and skill sets of our students,” says John Macko, associate director of NCE. “And while we are there, we discuss the value of co-ops and encourage employers to consider the advantages of working with our students.”

NCE staff network at conferences and visit potential employers to talk about students’ readiness for work; often RIT/NTID students are more well-versed in state-of-the art industry software than permanent employees at the companies they visit. NCE also gets referrals from employers for other companies that may have an interest in hiring. And students’ parents have successfully helped NCE staff make connections with potential employers. (See sidebar *How You Can Help*.)

“We also offer our award-winning Working Together: Deaf and Hearing People workshop, which helps employers understand hearing loss and learn that there are many successful strategies for communicating with deaf and hard-of-hearing people,” says Macko.

Biotechnology major Matthew Jenkins believes NCE’s services gave him the edge in securing his microbiology internship this past summer at the University of Georgia. Since he was the first deaf student ever hired, the college asked Glenda Senior, NTID Science Support Team member, and Mary Ellen Tait, Matt’s employment advisor, to present an adapted version of the workshop to the interns, faculty, and graduate students there. The topics included how to communicate with a deaf or hard-of-hearing person in laboratory, group discussion, and classroom settings.

“We go on-site to present excerpts of the workshop tailored to the employers’ needs,” says Tait. “Employers such as

the University of Georgia and Citigroup have invited us to do that as students begin their co-op experiences. Feedback from participants tells us that this equips the supervisor and co-workers with information and strategies that make the co-op and permanent employment experience successful for all.”

This combination of student preparation and employer education results in success.

“The workshop made my transition into the internship much easier for the teachers and the other interns,” says Matt. “My advice to other students is to take advantage of the opportunities and support that NCE provides and be aggressive in taking the co-ops and jobs available. I have learned that even though NCE works hard for you, in the end, your success depends on you.”

### How You Can Help

Job opportunities in the real world are all about connections and networking. RIT/NTID alumni working for Sprint, IBM, and government agencies such as the CIA and the Defense Contract Management Agency have been role models and encouraged their employers to provide co-ops and hire other deaf and hard-of-hearing young people. Parents have been particularly helpful in arranging some of those connections that translate into excellent co-op and permanent job opportunities for RIT/NTID students. Just recently, some parents from New Jersey made contact with a relative at Citigroup that resulted in both a number of summer co-ops as well as a permanent job for a graduate. If you know of any way you could help make an employment connection, contact John Macko by e-mail at [jrmned@rit.edu](mailto:jrmned@rit.edu) or by phone at 585-475-6726 (voice/TTY).

# Adam Drake

by Frank A. Kruppenbacher



**A** chat with Adam Drake, a third-year College of Business student, reveals an individual with a vision of the bright future toward which he is working diligently.

Born in Ithaca, N.Y., Adam attended mainstream school through fourth grade, and from fifth grade through high school went to New York State School for the Deaf in Rome. He graduated at the top of his class and knew from an early age that he was bound for college.

Adam, who has Usher's syndrome, learned about NTID from his sister who attended RIT.

"She told me about NTID," says Adam, "and suggested that I consider it for college. As a deaf student with low vision, I wanted to investigate all options available to me.

"My vision up close and far is pretty good," Adam explains, "but I am losing my field of vision quicker from top and bottom than side to side. I experience night blindness and am extremely sensitive to

bright sunlight."

Adam says that the services at RIT for students with low vision are ideal.

"RIT provides a quality of accessibility I didn't find at other colleges," Adam says. "It's easy for me to get around here and the lighting is very good."

Adam knows if he can manage in an environment, he can excel in his studies.

"What I really like at RIT are the courses that are hard," Adam says. "It shows that I can succeed beyond my own expectations. For me, RIT provides a real-world experience in a college setting."

# Dacia Anastasia Hirsch

by Frank A. Kruppenbacher

**C**atch up with Dacia Hirsch if you can! This former pastry chef, two-time equestrian champion, NTID Student Congress Director of Programming, and third-year Applied Optical Technology (AOT) student has filled her plate with passionate pursuits.

"I am always busy," says Dacia, 33. "And I use my time management skills to reach the goals I set for myself."

Born in Wisconsin, Dacia spent her childhood in Connecticut, Northern California, Colorado, and Oregon.

In 1993 and 1994, Dacia's skilled horseback riding won her amateur and professional World Championships in Hunter Pleasure, a style of riding for Morgan horses. With that, she became the first deaf person to win a championship title on a Morgan horse.

Moving on, Dacia studied at the Culinary School of the Rockies in Boulder, Colo., graduated in 2000, and became an assistant pastry chef at a restaurant in Aspen.

Since moving to New York State three years ago, Dacia, in addition to her AOT studies, has taken up equestrian dressage,



a highly competitive form of horseback riding admired for its form, grace, and precision. She hopes to someday compete in the Olympics.

"Dressage needs an intense amount of concentration and communication with the horse," Dacia says. "My being deaf eliminates outside distractions and helps me focus."

Dacia trains four days a week in Shortsville, N.Y., where she boards her two horses, Zaravich, a grey Quarter horse, and Aladdin, a black Hanoverian.

"These horses are not just my pets, they are like my children. Along with my AOT studies at NTID, they are a very important part of my life."



# Juan E. Rodriguez Jr.

by Pamela L. Carmichael



Juan Rodriguez brought down the house when he performed Whitney Houston's *The Greatest Love of All* at NTID's commencement ceremony last May. Juan, who graduated with an A.A.S. in Accounting Technology and was chosen as NTID's commencement delegate, performed the song in sign language, artistically expressing to his fellow graduates the message that they should believe in themselves.

"I wanted to encourage the other graduates and tell them, 'You can do it. There's nothing stopping you,'" says the 32-year-old.

Juan, who is from Union City, N.J., came to RIT/NTID because of the support services and the opportunities available to him here. After earning his associate degree, he decided to continue his education in RIT's College of Business, where he is studying Finance.

"I want to prepare myself for a professional career, so I can better provide for my kids,"

says Juan, father of Juan, 10; Jasmine, 9; and Bethany, 5. "I chose finance because I like working with money and because it offers a broad understanding of what's happening economically in the United States and around the world."

In addition to his studies, Juan works part time as an administrative assistant for the American Society for Training and Development. He says it's important to strive for balance in college.

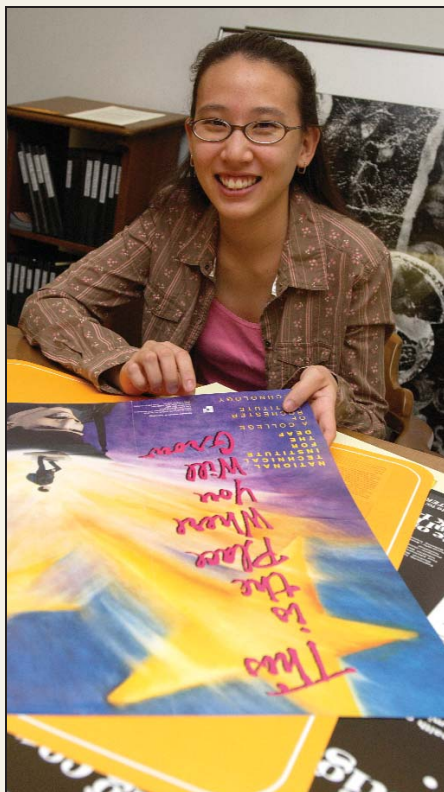
"It's important to focus on your education, but you can't isolate yourself," he explains. "You need to study and have a social life."

Juan's heritage and family are a source of strength for him, as is his belief that "success lies in the hands of the intangible."

"Sometimes you can't see that you're being helped, but there's always something guiding you along the way," says Juan.

# Sherry Shimizu

by Pamela L. Carmichael



What would make someone leave a Hawaiian paradise to come to Rochester? Sherry Shimizu, who was born and raised in Aiea, Hawaii, says she came here for "a new experience in a polar environment."

While Rochester's climate isn't exactly polar, winter can be cold and snowy, and the changing seasons here certainly contrast with the tropical climate in which Sherry grew up.

But Upstate New York's weather is only part of the story. As a high school junior, Sherry came to RIT/NTID for the Explore Your Future program and "fell in love with the campus." She knew then that this would be her college choice, and now the Packaging Science major is making the most of her experiences here.

"I'm amazed at the amount of support I receive and the excellent networking opportunities," says the 21-year-old.

Sherry works part time in the archives at RIT's Wallace Library and as an English tutor in the NTID Learning Center. She's also a member of Asian Deaf Club, RIT Packaging Club, and the student chapter

of the Institute of Packaging Professionals. This fall, she began writing an online journal, or blog, to chronicle her experiences here.

She hasn't decided yet which industry to focus on for her career in packaging, but she knows she wants to travel. Sherry, who is Japanese, would like to visit Japan as well as Korea and Europe.

"At this point in my life," says Sherry, "I'm trying to abide by this proverb:

'Dance like no one is watching, love like you've never been hurt, sing like no one is listening, work like you don't need the money, and live every day as if it were your last.'"

*Editor's note:*

You can read Sherry's blog at: [www.ntid.rit.edu/current/blogs/sherry/](http://www.ntid.rit.edu/current/blogs/sherry/).



# Seth Terkhorn

by Kathy A. Johncox

Seth Terkhorn uses several wake-up alarms, but not to help him get up for class. Seth, 21, a second-year, Computer Aided Drafting Technology (CADT) student from Ironton, Ohio, volunteers at the West Brighton Fire Department near RIT and occasionally is rousted out of bed for a fire emergency.

Seth's interest in fire fighting began when he attended a fire department open house as a small boy. Then, at age 13, while attending a mainstream school, he joined a junior firefighters group.

In addition to volunteering at the fire department, Seth attends fire specialty courses part-time at a local community college and holds down part-time jobs with RIT Campus Safety, the RIT Ambulance, and the Student Life Team.

"I enjoy helping people in emergency situations," Seth says. "And I have two of the important characteristics it takes to do that: the ability to be calm and to follow orders."

One of his brothers, himself hard-of-hearing and an RIT graduate, encouraged Seth to visit and to consider RIT/NTID for college. Seth, a three-time scholarship winner, highly recommends first-hand experience when making a college choice.

"Be sure to visit and see what the college has that might fit your career interests," Seth says. "Then get involved in things that you enjoy and that interest you. I have found many of those things right here."

Seth currently is taking full advantage of his RIT/NTID courses and local resources to help him prepare for a career in the field of fire prevention.

"My CADT major helps me create, read, and understand blueprints," says Seth. "These skills may help me become a fire marshal some day."



# Melanie Updegraff

by Kathy A. Johncox

"Know your limits, but be willing to push them" is a philosophy that Melanie Updegraff, 35, second-year student in NTID's American Sign Language-English Interpretation program incorporates into her everyday life.

A typical day for Melanie is going to class, then working in the NTID Business Studies Department as a student assistant, being the assistant innkeeper at a local bed and breakfast, and creating jewelry to sell in a venture she has with a business partner.

Born in Washington, D.C., Melanie moved a lot while growing up as her father worked at a number of schools for the deaf. She says home is wherever she happens to be.

"I come from a family very involved in deaf education and the deaf community wherever we went, yet we've had no deaf people in our family," says Melanie.

"I tried other careers, but just did not have the passion I felt I needed. I thought about interpreting for years, but wanted to explore other things before deciding on such a demanding profession.

"After talking with a few friends and graduates of RIT/NTID, I realized that interpreting was what I wanted to do, and this was the place to do it."

In her spare time, Melanie, a self-confessed "movie junkie," prefers dinner, a movie, and conversation with friends. Life after graduation will involve interpreting in a variety of community settings.



# Students Explore the World

by Kathy A. Johncox

**M**elinda Bobholz ate octopus salad in Dubrovnik, Croatia, and studied the architecture of that fortified city on the Adriatic. Sarah Gordon studied in a 15<sup>th</sup> century castle complete with a moat, and walked the cobblestone streets of London, England, where Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist might have picked pockets.

Through different options offered by RIT's Study Abroad Office, Melinda and Sarah each spent part of last summer

abroad, collecting college credits while having the experience of a lifetime.

"Melinda and Sarah were the first deaf students to participate in these programs through the Study Abroad Office," says Peter Lalley, NTID liaison for the Study Abroad Program. "A lot of thought and planning went into how we could offer an academically and socially accessible experience for our students in other countries."

Part of this preparation involved working with the participating colleges to make the arrangements and finding funding for interpreters to travel with and provide communication support for each student, inside and outside the classroom, as well as a notetaker who could take notes each day in their classes.

Melinda, a fourth-year student from Omro, Wisc., who will receive her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from RIT's College of Imaging Arts and Sciences this May, attended a program through the American College of Management and Technology in Dubrovnik where her courses included Art History of the Adriatic and Ecology of the Adriatic. The program's goal is to give students a look at a central European society in the midst of social and economic transformation by exploring cultural, environmental, and historical features.

Melinda's classes were made up of six students, two from the American College of Management and Technology (ACMT) in Croatia and three others from RIT.

"I was the only deaf student," she says, "and it was so much fun and such a good experience for me and for those people who had never experienced being with a deaf person in an educational situation before. Studying in Croatia was a great opportunity to grow personally and professionally by experiencing a rich culture, environment, history, and society. I feel more confident now in my

leadership skills as I am able to teach others and see another perspective using my experience in Europe."

With her fine arts background, Melinda was very interested in seeing Croatian and European art, and comparing this art of ancient history to art in the United States today.

"Art here seems much more modern and contemporary," she says. "The ability to make these comparisons will have a great impact on how I study, perceive, and create art in the future."

And observing the environment in Croatia appealed to Melinda's deep interest in preserving the environment.

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*"You get a broader view of the world just by occupying a different place in it."*

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*Queen's University International Study Centre brochure*

"It helped me develop a better understanding of the need to maintain a healthy environment, and will help me help others understand the cause and effect relationship each person has with the future of the planet," Melinda says.

Asked to sum up her experiences, she says, "I wanted to experience civilizations and nations that have existed for centuries. I wanted to see, touch, and feel the medieval cities, art, lifestyle, and culture that are so different from mine and yet have impacted my way of life so deeply. This past summer, I did all that and more."

When Lalley visited the International Study Centre (ISC) in Sussex, England, an extension of Queen's University of Kingston, Canada, to discuss arrangements for Sarah's summer session, he found the faculty and staff very cooperative and supportive of



**A Sense of Place** While on field studies, Sarah Gordon takes in the sights of London, including the tallest, and arguably most famous, Big Ben.



having students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing in their programs.

A generous gift from the Dr. Alfred Bader and Dr. Isabel Bader Foundation supported Sarah's participation in the ISC summer program.

"Our goal is to make it possible for our deaf students to see different cultures, different ways of life, experience different instructors," says Lalley, who is looking to expand the study abroad program, so more students can have the experience. "I think living and studying abroad enhances the students' lifelong appreciation for what they have in the United States and for what RIT is able to provide for its students."

Sarah, a third-year student from St. Louis, Mo., is a Visual Media major. Her summer abroad program operates through the ISC, the purpose of which is to give students a life experience that goes far beyond the classroom. This program is housed in Herstmonceux Castle in Sussex, England. Three quarters of the students were from Canada, a few from Mexico, and the rest were from the United States, but Sarah was the only deaf student.

"Because I was American, deaf, and a woman, I felt at a disadvantage at first," says Sarah. "But I soon overcame my fear of meeting people of different cultures from different lands. London is so diverse; there are people from all over Europe, and they are more accepting of other cultures than we are."

"Being the only deaf student was good in some ways, and I enjoyed teaching the other students some sign language," Sarah continues. "I also learned that universities in Europe do not have many deaf people. Sometimes one college will only have 10 people who are deaf. People in London who knew about Rochester talked about how wonderful it is, with so many deaf and hard-of-hearing people in one place."

Sarah's course choices included Political Economy and Mass Media, and Literature and Place with each course having 10 – 12 students. In the literature class, the teacher used a "literary" map to take students on field studies around London and show them the local settings that were described in the books they were reading in class.



**A Day in the Sun** The older, fortified section of the city of Dubrovnik provides the backdrop as Melinda Bobholz enjoys the warmth of the Adriatic sun.

Sarah enjoyed the classes and the reality approach, which brought books like Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* to life. However, it was in her politics class that Sarah made the most interesting discovery—she realized she wanted to change majors.

"I was majoring in Photojournalism and loved it, but I realized that it was much more than just taking pictures," says Sarah. "It involved the news media and politics and many other areas that I decided I did not want to be involved in for the rest of my life. I've decided to major in Visual Media instead."

Both Melinda and Sarah agree that the outstanding interpreting and notetaking support they received made for a positive and productive experience and allowed them to participate fully in all the activities available to them.

Melinda and Sarah each took the opportunity to spend a little time traveling in Europe before they returned home and tucked away memories, friendships, and feelings they will never forget.

Now that these two students have blazed the trail, Lalley hopes to offer more students the chance to see the world, and themselves, with a different perspective.

"Most recently, I've had some very promising discussions with a study abroad program in Denmark," says Lalley. "Building these new relationships will increase study abroad opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing students for years to come."

Reflecting back on her summer, Sarah says she learned a lot about the world and about herself.

"I learned that the world is not always a safe place," she explains. "The London bombings happened while I was there, and I actually wondered if I would be able to go home. I found the world full of diversity—with many different governments and ways of life. And I learned that there are many different perspectives to a place or a situation, and I am just one."

# Thinking About Language and Literacy

by Kathleen S. Smith



**Projecting the Future** NTID instructor Leslie Bowers discusses high school and college literacy requirements during her Think Tank presentation.

In June 2005, NTID hosted the fourth International English Think Tank, the theme of which was, Literacy in the English Classroom and Beyond. The three-day event, sponsored by the Postsecondary Education Programs Network, RIT/NTID, and the Council of American Instructors of the Deaf, brought together more than 125 educators and researchers from middle schools, high schools, and colleges in the United States, Russia, Scotland, Thailand, and Brazil, who gathered to discuss new strategies for teaching English to deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

Conference organizer Dr. Stephen Aldersley, chairperson of NTID's Department of Liberal Studies, says, "The purpose of the Think Tank was to focus on and think about the particular challenges that English presents for some deaf students."

Among the topics discussed were the reading challenges some deaf students face, the need for standards to assess English proficiency, how to teach written English poetry to deaf students, and how movies, games, and puzzles all can be creative tools to help teach English to deaf students.

NTID Assistant Professors Kathryn Schmitz and John Panara presented a workshop on Computer-Assisted Writing Instruction, in which they described how they use personal computers and overhead projectors to teach essay writing in a collaborative writing environment.

Schmitz and Panara review work done by students at the beginning and end of each quarter, looking not only at the quality of the writing, but also at each student's change of attitude and level of confidence.

"Some students initially are shy about sharing their essays during class, but they know that getting feedback from their peers and from me will help them become better writers," Schmitz says. "I find that if students can master the art of thinking clearly about their subject, they typically write more clearly, and this is my main measure of success as an instructor."

NTID Assistant Professor Susan Keenan also co-presented a session, Deaf Students and College English, with adjunct instructor Leslie Bowers. They explored the reading, writing,

and grammar skills that deaf high school students in New York State are being taught.

"Assessment tools at the primary, middle school, and high school levels ask students to do a variety of tasks, including notetaking, using graphic organizers, using information in graphs and charts, and writing short and long responses," says Keenan. "The question is, how well do these tasks serve deaf students once they reach college?"

"Improving reading and writing skills is not easy for deaf students," says NTID Associate Professor of English Dr. Kathleen Eilers-Crandall. "They often need to consult one on one with their English professors, advisors, career counselors, and tutors. Teaching them to make real progress in their reading and writing is a group effort."

"It's appropriate that we hosted this Think Tank at NTID," Aldersley says, "because we have established a reputation for doing a good job in preparing our students for the language challenges they'll face when they graduate. I doubt there's another English program anywhere as strong as ours."



**Tag Team** Assistant Professors Kathryn Schmitz and John Panara make a point during their Think Tank workshop on Computer-Assisted Writing Instruction.



# Joe Hamilton

by Kathleen S. Smith



At 13, Joe Hamilton took apart the family lawnmower. At 14, he retooled bicycles and sold them to friends. And now, at age 36, Hamilton has a job that pays him to tinker, drill, and hammer all day long.

Hamilton, shop foreman for the NTID Cultural and Creative Studies/Theater

Department, has built more than 50 sets since joining NTID in 1995—not bad for a self-taught carpenter and painter who grew up admiring MacGyver, a 1980s television character who used everyday items and science skills to get him out of life-threatening situations.

MacGyver disarmed nuclear missiles with paper clips and stopped sulfuric acid leaks with chocolate candy.

Most of his projects at NTID don't involve that level of ingenuity, but Hamilton, who received an associate degree in Manufacturing Processes from NTID in 1991, nonetheless has a reputation as “the guy who can fix anything.” In five to six weeks, his job is to turn a miniature set

created by a professional designer into a full-scale version, usually with a staff of about a dozen students.

Says Quinn Cruise, a first-year Laboratory Science Technology student who works in the theater, “There is absolutely nothing about the set that Joe doesn't know.”

Adds fourth-year Social Work student and part-time carpenter Jon LeJeune, “He never gets mad, no matter how many mistakes we make. He has incredible patience and a great sense of humor.”

Hamilton was recognized by NTID's Student Congress in 2001 when he received a Staff Member of the Month award.

“Joe is a great mentor, not only to students, but also to external people who use our theater,” says Performing Arts Artistic Director Bonnie Meath-Lang. “He often is the first deaf person with whom they have ever had contact, and he always makes a positive impression. I'm very appreciative of that.”

# Charlotte L.V. Thoms

by Kathleen S. Smith

Charlotte L.V. Thoms, assistant professor in NTID's Business Studies Department, believes that teaching is her destiny. Thoms came to NTID in 1991 after teaching at both the high school and college levels as well as serving as principal of an elementary school.

“The academic environment always was stimulating for me,” says Thoms. “Whether it was accounting or scuba diving, I admired the teachers who walked, talked, lived, and breathed their discipline.”

Thoms, whose classes are popular with students, teaches general business courses as well as accounting.

“I admire Mrs. Thoms' excellent communication skills and her willingness to change her methods to fit our needs,” says student Karen Fuhrer. “She is motivating and interesting, a high quality teacher.”

“She has taught me to be professional, and to continue to work hard to achieve my dreams,” says student Eyob Zerayeus.

Since joining NTID, Thoms has received a faculty/staff pluralism award and a Provost's Productivity Grant, and has been nominated for RIT's Outstanding Teaching Award and the Provost's Excellence in Teaching Award. She mentors prospective teachers, travels nationally and internationally “telling the NTID story,” has authored three books, and says she still has time to be an attentive wife, mother, and grandmother.

Thoms has studied at West Virginia State College, Edinboro University, the University of Akron, the University of Pittsburgh, and Youngstown State University. Her master's degree in Human Development/Curriculum for the Deaf is from RIT and the University of Rochester.

“I am a teacher,” says Thoms, “an excited, enthusiastic, energetic, educated, empathetic teacher—at least that's what my students tell me!”





## Siblings and Legacies— It's All in the Family at NTID

by Frank A. Kruppenbacher

Connect all the dots and Francis Steele, a first-year Business student from Germantown, Md., is the eighth member of his family to attend Rochester Institute of Technology and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

Francis' parents, Felece, '81, and Bob (Robert III) '80, are RIT/NTID alumni. So are Bob's two sisters, Jennifer, '00, and Terri (Steele) Worek, '88, '97. Terri is married to RIT/NTID alumnus Keith Worek, '87. Worek's sister, Barbara (Worek) Stanislow, '84, is married to NTID Information and Computing Studies faculty member Joseph Stanislow, '81.

"We are thrilled with Francis' decision to go to RIT," says Bob Steele. "Felece and I have a lot of faith in NTID. It's a wonderful opportunity for deaf students. We wouldn't be where we are today without it. We believe that our son made a wise decision."

Legacy students like Francis Steele are those who have at least one parent, sibling, or relative who has graduated from the same college the student is attending. Since 1968, the greater RIT community has been enriched with notable family legacies and siblings. By twos and by threes—and more, in some cases—individuals from the same family have come here to study.

RIT/NTID today boasts as many as 10 sibling pairs and as many as nine other students with siblings, parents or other relatives who have benefited from the career-focused education here.

**Brother and sister** Andrew and Alaina Chorney, of Manalapan, N.J.





**Sisters** Ibukun, right, and Abiodun Odunlami of Philadelphia, Pa., are roommates.

### Seeing Double

Born three and a half years apart, sisters Ibukun (Ibu) and Abiodun (Abi) Odunlami, of Philadelphia, Pa., are roommates.

“We are sisters, but surprisingly we do not do everything together,” says the elder Ibu, a Business student at NTID. “If we did, then we’d end up fighting over something. We do go to some events together.”

“One thing we do is watch out for each other,” says Abi, a Laboratory Science Technology student. “Instead of any rivalry between us, we respect each others’ space and who we are.”

“We have to stick together,” adds Ibu.

Siblings Alaina and Andrew Chorney, of Manalapan, N.J., share a passion for sports, especially soccer. Alaina, a Graphic Design major, has been a member of RIT’s Women’s soccer team for three years, while Andrew, an Electrical Engineering major, played on the men’s team his first year at RIT.

“Andrew and I figured that RIT would be the right place for us,” Alaina says, “and that’s how it’s been working out.”

Alaina says that although she and Andrew are as close as best friends, they each have their own individual circle of friends and interests as well.

“When we were young, we did everything together,” says Alaina.

“Now, we have our own ways of life. I am an artist, and Andrew is an engineer. We are not twins, which is something we’ve been asked a million times since we were very little.”

Much like the Odunlami and Chorney siblings, deaf sisters Joanne and Michelle Skowzgard, of Grayslake, Ill., near Chicago, often are seen together on campus. Older sister Joanne is a Business Management major in RIT’s College of Business, and Michelle is a Fine Art student in the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences.

“Of course we disagree and get angry with each other,” says Michelle. “Then, after a few minutes, we look at each other, laugh, hug, and forget about it. I admire JoJo for the many goals she has achieved in her life. That’s what I really love about her.”

“Michelle has one of the biggest hearts ever,” says Joanne. “It’s so easy to love her, despite some of the messes she gets herself into. She makes me laugh a lot, especially because we share so many inside jokes.”

### The ties that bind

Similar to the pride shared by Felece and Bob Steele for their son Francis, alumnus Ken Sorkin, ’74, beams with joy for his own legacy, daughter Elizabeth “Lizzie” Sorkin, third-year student in the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences Film/Video/Animation program and president of the NTID Student Congress.

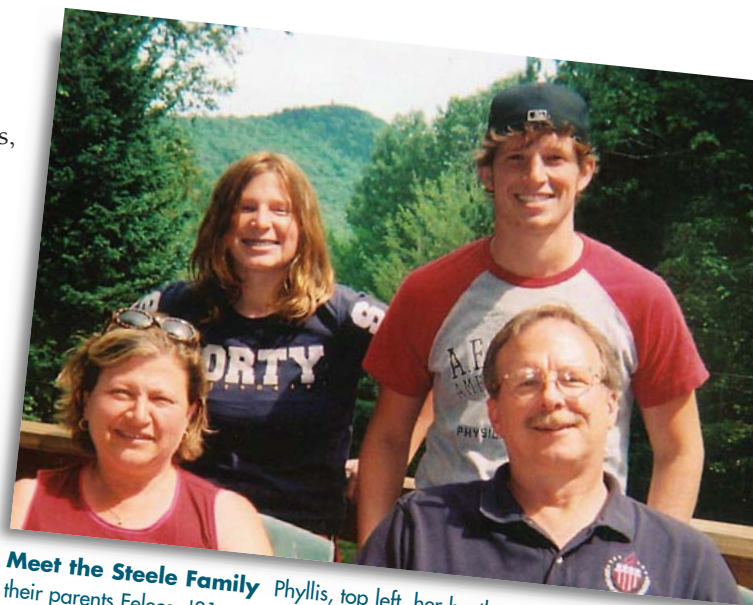
“Lizzie knew from an early age that I graduated from RIT,” Sorkin says.

“I saw her growing to appreciate visual arts and visual communication, just as I did through some of the courses I took at NTID from 1972 to 1974. So, I encouraged her to participate in NTID’s Explore Your Future (EYF) program.”

After EYF during the summer of 1998, Sorkin says that Lizzie enthusiastically decided to apply to RIT/NTID.

“When she was accepted, I was thrilled,” Sorkin recalls. “I am very proud that a child of mine is receiving the same wonderful benefits of college and career that I did from RIT/NTID. Even though there are 25 years between my time at NTID and Lizzie’s, we definitely have a shared pride for RIT.”

*Editor’s Note:* RIT offers an Alumni Legacy Scholarship—a one-time award for RIT alumni and their children. Applications for the 2006-2007 academic year are due April 1, 2006. For more information, visit: [www.rit.edu/NTID/LegacyScholarship](http://www.rit.edu/NTID/LegacyScholarship).



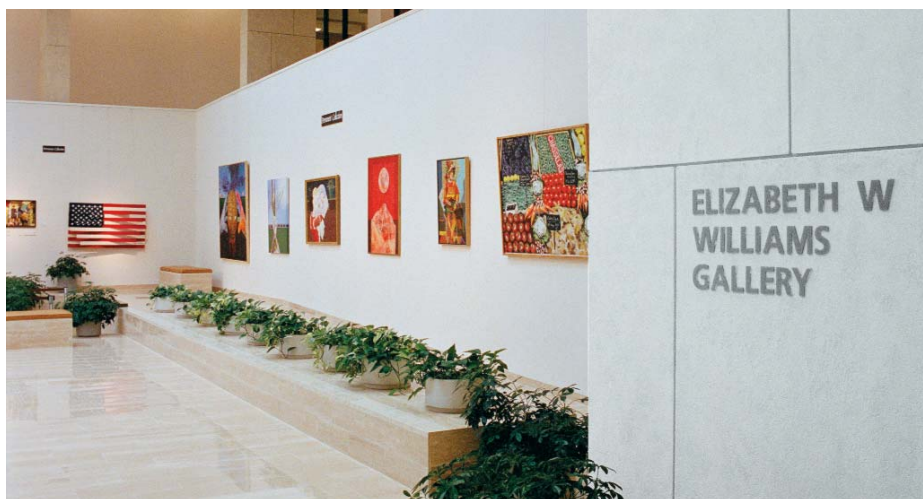
**Meet the Steele Family** Phyllis, top left, her brother Francis, and their parents Felece, ’81, and Bob (Robert III), ’80, of Germantown, Md.

# Losing a Good Friend

by Kathy A. Johncox



**A Dedicated Friend** Elizabeth "Cookie" Williams posed in the gallery that bears her name at the opening of the Dyer Arts Center in 2001.



**A Beautiful Legacy** The Williams Gallery welcomes visitors into the Dyer Arts Center and is a beautiful and fitting legacy for Elizabeth "Cookie" Williams whose lifelong interest in the arts led her to be a dedicated contributor to arts-related projects and causes.

**E**lizabeth "Cookie" Williams, a wonderful and dedicated longtime friend of RIT/NTID, passed away suddenly September 19, 2005.

Williams, who was deaf, was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1928. During her early years, she attended public schools, and during summers while in high school and college, attended various art institutes, focusing on the fields of art, design, and fine arts history. One of her proudest accomplishments was receiving her Bachelor of Science degree in Fine Arts from University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. For Williams, a business woman who owned ceramics shops and a women's apparel shop in Wilmington, Ohio, her education was the beginning of an involvement and a delight in the arts that would be a lifelong interest.

Williams became a dedicated contributor to the arts, and the first of her generous gifts to RIT/NTID replaced the stage curtains in NTID's Robert F. Panara Theatre. Her commitment to the arts and RIT/NTID continued in 1997 when she established the Elizabeth Williams Endowed Fund for the Performing

Arts, which awards scholarships annually to deaf and hard-of-hearing students involved in NTID's Performing Arts programs. Then, in May 2000, Williams made a major gift to the creation of the Joseph F. and Helen C. Dyer Arts Center at NTID. The beautiful main gallery in the Dyer Arts Center bears her name.

"Cookie was a warm and devoted friend," says T. Alan Hurwitz, RIT vice president and dean for NTID. "Her commitment to improving life for deaf men and women for generations to come is reflected in all that she contributed, not only in her financial support of our mission here, but also in the ideas and counsel that she shared so freely."

As a deaf woman and mother of three children, two of whom are deaf, Cookie was struck by the high quality of educational opportunities available for deaf and hard-of-hearing students at RIT/NTID. Her joy in the arts, and in supporting causes related to the arts and education for deaf and hard-of-hearing young people, translated into a long relationship with NTID. She once said that she wished she were

younger, so she could have gone to college here herself.

Throughout her life, Williams also was an outstanding supporter of activities involving people who are deaf. She was an active member of the NTID Foundation Board of Directors and the NTID National Advisory Group and enthusiastically shared her considerable insight and valuable perspectives. She also was active in the Ohio Association of the Deaf, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf. She supported the National Theatre of the Deaf, the Kentucky Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Deaf Festival in Louisville, Ky., and the Central Institute for the Deaf in St. Louis, Mo., as well as Wilmington College, the Boy Scouts of America, Clinton Memorial Hospital in Wilmington, Ohio, and numerous other charities.

"Every time we look at the curtains in the Panara Theatre, when we rejoice in the scholarships for our performing arts students, and when we enjoy the beauty and calm of the lovely Dyer Arts Center, we are surrounded by Cookie's memory," says Hurwitz.





**Brian Jenerson**

**In Memoriam: Brian Jenerson**

Brian Jenerson, a freelance interpreter and 2003 graduate of RIT/NTID's American Sign Language-English Interpretation program, passed away in September. Brian had many passions in his life, not the least of which was to become a sign language interpreter, and he achieved that dream, becoming the first African-American male to graduate from NTID's interpreting program. Another of Brian's passions was his love for music and dance, and in recognition of that, Dr. Linda Siple, his teacher and friend, established a fund to buy a seat in his memory in the recently renovated Robert F. Panara Theatre on campus. Donations and gifts from friends, faculty, staff, and fellow students provided more than enough money to buy the seat in Brian's memory. His friends, family, and loved ones will be proud to visit the theater and see this permanent reminder of the life that Brian loved.

**Max Factor Family Foundation Sponsors Workshops for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Latino Americans**

Through a recent partnership between RIT/NTID and the Max Factor Family Foundation, information technology and career development workshops for deaf and hard-of-hearing Latino Americans are available in the greater Los Angeles area.

The foundation's award of \$100,000 allows NTID to combine the expertise of its faculty and staff with the strong presence and community influence of the foundation in the Los Angeles area to improve the career preparation and successful integration into the

**Panara Theatre Buy-A-Seat Program**

When Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz announced the Panara Theatre Buy-A-Seat Program in December, he also announced that the first two chairs had been purchased in honor of Robert F. Panara, the much-loved former English teacher at RIT/NTID for whom the theater is named, and his late wife, Shirley. Dr. Hurwitz and his wife, Vicki, also have purchased chairs as have an increasing number of faculty, staff, and members of

the campus community. If you or anyone you know would like to honor a friend or family member, or wish to celebrate an achievement, contact Bryan Hensel in the NTID Development office at 585-475-6220 or go to [www.rit.edu/NTID/BuyASeat](http://www.rit.edu/NTID/BuyASeat) for more information.



workplace of deaf and hard-of-hearing Latino adults.

NTID's Deaf Initiative in Information Technology program, supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation, over the past several years has presented workshops to enhance the technical skills of more than 300 deaf professionals from all over the country who are employed in business, government, and non-profit organizations. NTID faculty and staff are now customizing the program for deaf and hard-of-hearing Latino adults. A key component of the program is that an instructor familiar with deafness is provided, so that the workshop participants have the advantage of instruction in sign language from someone who understands the learning strategies that best assist deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

"Communicating in sign language allows people to fully participate in the workshops through group discussions, problem-solving, and networking with other attendees," says Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, RIT vice president and NTID dean.

The Max Factor Family Foundation has a strong commitment to encourage human development among needy populations in the Greater Los Angeles area. In 1991, the foundation established an endowed scholarship at NTID, which has funded all or part of the education for 88 deaf and hard-of-hearing students from that area.

An additional benefit of the foundation's gift for both employers and potential deaf and hard-of-hearing employees in the area is that NTID staff members will present NTID's award-winning

Working Together: Deaf and Hearing People workshop. This workshop shows employers ways to integrate deaf and hard-of-hearing workers into the workplace.

**RIT Celebration of Community Fund Establishd**

J. David McCloskey, an interpreter for the NTID Department of Access Services since 1991 and currently co-chair of NTID's Faculty Staff Campus Campaign Committee has become the first NTID staff member to make a planned gift, a gift that will benefit RIT/NTID multicultural activities now and for posterity. McCloskey has made a gift commitment establishing the RIT Celebration of Community Endowed Fund to support organizations on campus that foster the spirit of community that McCloskey so values.

Central to the mission of the fund is the support of a time of inclusion and celebration designed to bring diverse student groups together for special programming. This fund will provide for events where all can, as McCloskey puts it, "celebrate themselves in the presence of each other."

"RIT has the opportunity to influence the world," says McCloskey. "The world today is such that maybe someday some of our students will be standing across from each other working on the solution to a problem or voicing a concern that has global implications. That they have had the opportunity to develop respect for each other as students here will go a long way toward a positive outcome."

# Elizabeth Ayers Gibson

by Frank A. Kruppenbacher



In the hands of highly skilled practitioners, the equipment and techniques of modern medical technology are revolutionizing the healthcare industry. As a result, treatments

are more effective, procedures are less invasive, and Americans can be healthier, more productive individuals.

Among skilled ultrasound practitioners, RIT Diagnostic Medical Sonography graduate Elizabeth Ayers Gibson, '98, '02, has earned what few in her field have achieved—Advanced Practice Sonographer status with the

Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonography (SDMS). The 2003 Outstanding Employee Award winner at Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle, Wash., is one of only a few in the United States to meet SDMS's

strict requirements.

"This is a tremendous personal and professional accomplishment, a goal I've held ever since becoming a practicing sonographer," says Ayers Gibson. "It reflects the hard work I have invested in my career."

"I am impressed with Liz's ability to go above and beyond the call of duty," says Shannon Boswell, manager of diagnostic imaging at Virginia Mason Medical Center. "She has never let challenges or barriers hold her down. I am so glad she is a part of our team."

Ayers Gibson's exceptional skills reflect the quality of her RIT education. The university's ultrasound program is one of only a few such degree programs in the country.

# Alan Gifford

by Frank A. Kruppenbacher

When Hurricane Katrina swept through the Gulf Coast region and into the history books as one of the deadliest and costliest natural disasters ever to hit the United States, RIT/NTID Alumnus Alan Gifford, '77, was quickly propelled into the eye of recovery efforts.

"It was Labor Day weekend," recalls Gifford, the first deaf graduate of RIT's bachelor's degree program in Civil Engineering. "I had just completed work as the resident engineer in Weymouth, Mass., for a \$46 million pump station and tunnel system when I got an unexpected phone call."

Gifford's employer, The Shaw Group, Inc., dispatched Gifford from his home near Boston to the company's headquarters in Baton Rouge, La.

Since early September, he has been providing construction management support services for work projects to remove debris and restore New Orleans' natural gas, water and sewage systems.

From the company's command center, Gifford receives information from project



managers in the field. He compiles the data, including costs and methodology of repairs, into reports that he submits to Federal Emergency Management Agency officials.

"Our first task was to repair water mains," Gifford says. "In Jefferson Parish we repaired 481 broken water mains in 17 days."

And he has received kudos for his work. "In fact," says Shaw's Resource Manager Barton Rogers, "the organization and

documentation by Gifford has been used as a model for other Shaw hurricane projects."

While the extreme devastation has made it a challenging environment in which to work, Gifford, who will continue working in New Orleans for several months, says he's happy to help.

"The people have been kind," says Gifford. "They all say, 'Thanks for coming down here to help.'"





**Construction continues** on the \$4.5 million CSD Student Development Center at NTID. Named for Communication Service for the Deaf, Inc. (CSD), which committed the first lead gift for the two-story, 30,000 square-foot center, the facility will be connected to NTID's Lyndon Baines Johnson Building. Construction is scheduled to be completed in fall 2006. Watch the construction progress via a live Web cam at: [www.rit.edu/NTID/SDCwebcam](http://www.rit.edu/NTID/SDCwebcam).





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**Bitten by the Acting Bug** In the NTID Performing Arts Program's fall production of *The Passion of Dracula*, Count Dracula (Jeff Pratt) claimed the lovely Wilhelmina (Joanne Skowzgard) as his bride and made her immortal with his kiss. In this production, deaf actors used sign language and hearing actors used spoken English to present a genuine horror-thriller based on characters from the Bram Stoker novel.