

SPRING / SUMMER 2007

FOCUS

NTID

National Technical Institute for the Deaf • Rochester Institute of Technology



Honoring NTID's First Leader

Convocation and Commencement



Academic Award Winners A number of students were honored at the NTID Academic Awards Ceremony in May. Pictured in photo at left are, from left to right, Elena Iskandarova and John-Michael Stern, who received Academic Achievement awards; Reyes Preciado and Jenamarie Daviton-Sciandra, who received Outstanding Graduate awards; and Arrika Nowland, who received an American Sign Language and Interpreting Education Outstanding Graduate award. Pictured in the photo at right are, from left to right, Theresa Weeks and Michael E. Lawson, who received Honorable Mentions; Abiodun Odunlami, who was chosen as NTID's College Delegate; and Bernd Houver, who received an Honorable Mention.



Presidential Advice Former President William Jefferson Clinton delivered the commencement address to a crowd of more than 13,000 at RIT's Academic Convocation. Clinton encouraged graduates to see the commonalities that all people share and to use their unique talents for the public good in today's insecure and unstable world. RIT awarded Clinton an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters.



Honoring a Humanitarian RIT awarded Yohei Sasakawa, chairman of The Nippon Foundation of Japan, a Doctorate of Humane Letters at the Academic Convocation. Sasakawa has worked toward the eradication of leprosy around the world. The Nippon Foundation of Japan has awarded NTID-based PEN-International \$8 million in grants. PEN works to improve the education of men and women who are deaf around the world.



A Proud Representative Abiodun (Abi) Odunlami, who graduated with honors from NTID's Laboratory Science Technology program, was selected to represent NTID as College Delegate for RIT's 2007 Academic Convocation.

RIT marked two milestones during its 122nd Commencement: The university's living-alumni population surpassed 100,000, as 3,500 undergraduate and graduate students received diplomas; and RIT President Albert Simone presided over his final RIT Commencement. Simone retired June 30 following 15 years as RIT president.

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NTID honored its founding director at the dedication of the D. Robert Frisina Quadrangle at RIT in April. Frisina has been a pioneer in the field of hearing loss and deafness for more than 40 years. See the article on Page 3.

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FOCUS

NTID

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Honoring a Pioneer

In April, we honored a true pioneer and visionary, Dr. D. Robert Frisina, NTID's first director, by dedicating a beautiful quadrangle in his name outside our new CSD Student Development Center.

During his remarks at the ceremony that brought together students, faculty and staff members, alumni, RIT/NTID retirees and members of the RIT Board of Trustees and NTID National Advisory Group, Dr. Frisina noted that the quadrangle's ceiling, figuratively and literally, is the sky... "a place where hopes are raised, where students are encouraged to reach for their star, and with a little help, to catch it."

In the 10 years he served as director of NTID and in the three decades since, Dr. Frisina has helped thousands of students catch their

stars. And now, at a time when many of his colleagues are enjoying the relaxing pace of retirement, Dr. Frisina continues his work as director of the International Center for Hearing and Speech Research at NTID, serving as an outstanding example of the persevering spirit of those who recognized the importance of creating the National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

Indeed, all of the programs, clubs, leadership opportunities, and adventures enjoyed by today's students can be traced to the seeds of empowerment and education that Dr. Frisina sowed some 40 years ago. Several of these ventures are featured in this issue of *FOCUS*—research programs, faculty accomplishments, outreach efforts, and two alumni who are NTID's first-ever Fulbright Scholars. Could Dr. Frisina or anyone from NTID's original group of planners, architects and faculty members ever have imagined it nearly four decades ago?

With the pace of life today moving at 21st century speed, the dedication of the Frisina Quadrangle offered a chance for everyone to relive and savor the memories of those inaugural days when NTID was being built, brick by brick, program by program, into the fine institution it has become.

None of NTID's accomplishments would have been possible without Bob Frisina and the visionary group of faculty and staff members he gathered around him in those early days. We all owe him a debt of thanks.

Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz

Fitting Tribute for NTID Founder

by Ilene J. Avallone



Speaking from the Heart NTID's founding director, Dr. D. Robert Frisina, addressed the crowd at the dedication of the D. Robert Frisina Quadrangle, saying, "The sky is the ceiling of this quad, a place where dreams are made, hopes are raised, and where students are encouraged to reach for their star, and with a little help, to catch it. Who could ask for anything more?"

This spring, the RIT community gathered to dedicate the D. Robert Frisina Quadrangle at RIT, honoring NTID's founding director, a pioneer in the field of hearing loss and deafness for more than 40 years.

"I can't imagine a more fitting name for this quadrangle," said Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, RIT vice president and CEO/dean of NTID at the dedication ceremony. "It's a well-traveled path to and from classes and the spot to meet and relax with friends, colleagues and peers. It's the heart of NTID's campus, and it's fitting that it bears the name of

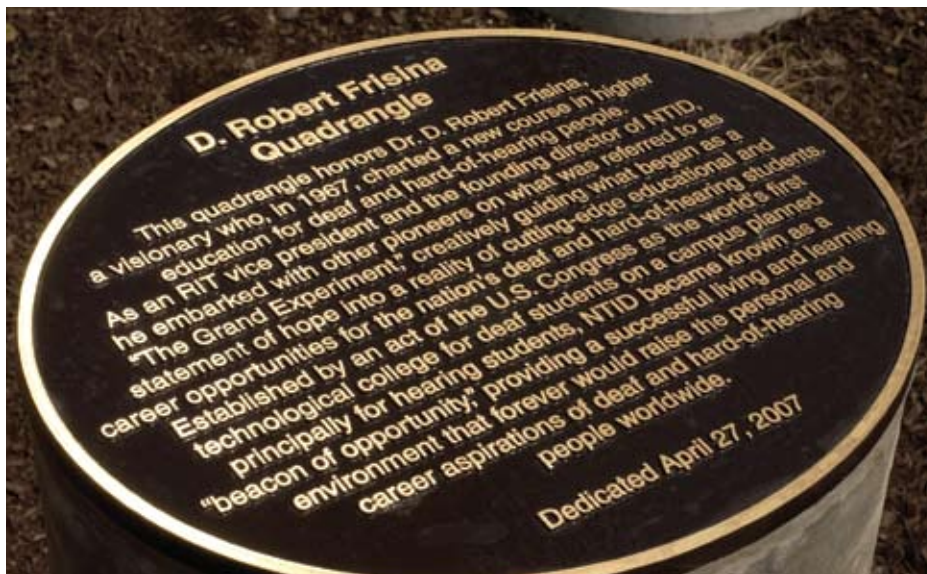
the college's founding director."

In 1967, Frisina, then a professor of audiology at Gallaudet University and dean of the Graduate School, was selected to serve as NTID's first director. He, with other pioneers, began what was referred to as "The Grand Experiment," guiding NTID and developing cutting-edge educational and career opportunities for the nation's deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

"At the time of my appointment as NTID director, the circumstances for the deaf population in the country were not very bright," says Frisina.

"Less than one percent of all college-age deaf individuals were enrolled in postsecondary education. Of those employed, most held unskilled or semi-unskilled positions, with a virtual absence of technical and managerial positions."

Frisina, who was scrupulous in selecting staff, diligent about getting physical space and innovative in designing the curriculum offerings, surrounded himself with a core group of planners who shared his belief that educating deaf students at RIT was both viable and of historic significance. For him, failure was not an option.



Lasting Recognition A plaque at the entrance to the new quad recognizes Dr. Frisina and his contributions to NTID.

Over the next 12 years, his leadership and commitment charted the course for improved educational opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and forever changed their career opportunities in the nation's marketplace.

"The most rewarding parts of my efforts here at NTID have been maintaining the integrity of the intent of the federal law that enabled the establishment of NTID, and witnessing the unprecedented success of the Grand Experiment," says Frisina.

Since the first 70 students enrolled in 1968, thousands of students have graduated, and more than 1,100 students from all over the United States and other countries attend today. Perhaps most important is that, historically, 95 percent of deaf and hard-of-hearing RIT/NTID graduates who have chosen to enter the workforce have found employment.

"NTID is remarkable for its epic role in the history of deaf people, creating technical and professional career opportunities, inspiring changes in educational practices and enabling socio-economic parity," says Frisina.

In his distinguished career, Frisina has earned many RIT awards, including the Presidential Medallion, the Principal Investigator Award, the Four Presidents Award, and the RIT

Diversity Trailblazer Award. He also earned the Distinguished Alumnus Award from Westminster College, the Bicentennial Medal of Excellence Award from the New York State Board of Regents, the Civic Award for Education from the Rochester



Dedicating NTID Former First Lady Bird Johnson and Dr. Robert Frisina tour campus during the NTID dedication ceremony in 1974.

Chamber of Commerce, the Lyon's Founder Award from the Rochester School for the Deaf and the Special Recognition Award from University of Buffalo for his contributions to research and education.

He first became interested in deafness when he was an undergraduate student at Westminster College, after being invited to assist in athletics at the Missouri School for the Deaf, located

near Westminster. After this initial contact, his interest grew.

"This first-time experience among deaf people stimulated a good deal of thinking about language development and education," he says, "and it led me to earn my master's degree in education of the deaf at Gallaudet University and my doctorate in audiology at Northwestern University."

Having chosen education as his life's work, Frisina says he was satisfied simply to have been able to serve in constructive ways. "This visible recognition," he says of the quad, "is like 'frosting on the cake.'"

"Dr. Frisina is an innovator and a tireless advocate for causes related to the education of deaf people," says Hurwitz. "Walking through the quadrangle each day will remind students, faculty and staff, alumni, parents and friends of this college just how much he helped it flourish."

In his own words

At the dedication ceremony, Dr. Frisina spoke from the heart about what the quadrangle represents:

"The quad means openness for all to see and enjoy—open to students with different educational backgrounds and philosophies, and open to the discussion of ideas and practices. For me, it is a breath of fresh educational air.

"The quad symbolizes change—measured change. It is open to the beauty of the summers and the harshness of the winters, constantly adapting to nature's predictabilities and whims. And so it is with a demand-based institution, whose curricula must constantly adapt to the changing workplace.

"And finally, the quad symbolizes renewal—every spring with the blossoming of flowers and chirping of birds, and every fall with the excitement of welcoming a new group of students; both invigorating signs of renewal to an ever changing educational environment."

Fulbright Firsts for NTID

by Ilene J. Avallone

Last year, Katherine (Kate) Groves and Jeffrey Cougler became the first deaf individuals from NTID to be awarded Fulbright grants—one of the most prestigious international grants awarded by the U.S. government.

Established in 1946 under legislation introduced by the late Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, the program offers grants for individuals to go abroad to study, work, teach or engage in independent research to build mutual understanding between people of the United States and other countries.

“A lot of thought, planning and preparation went into applying for the competitive Fulbright scholarships, and I am so proud of Kate and Jeffrey’s accomplishments in being chosen as Fulbright scholars,” says Peter Lalley, RIT/NTID liaison for the Fulbright Program.

Kate Groves

This summer, Groves finishes her Fulbright in Cossato, Italy, where she has worked in a bilingual school (with deaf and hearing students) to help teachers integrate technology within their classrooms and build a linguistic bridge between Italian Sign Language and written Italian.

Her own experience in using technology in the deaf bilingual classroom at New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD), where she has been teaching deaf students for the past three years, triggered her interest in applying for the Fulbright scholarship.

“At the NMSD, my integration of technology in the classroom yielded positive results for students, who gained skills in bridging ASL and written English through using technology,” says Groves. “I was interested to see if similar results could be achieved in Italian classrooms.”

While at the Cossato School, Groves, who holds a BS in Biomedical Photographic Communication, and an MS in Secondary Education of Students



Taking in the Sights Jeffrey Cougler and Katherine Groves, NTID’s first deaf Fulbright scholars, explore Biella, Italy.

who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing, both from RIT, developed lesson plans that incorporated technology and created training workshops for teachers.

Groves says there is nothing more valuable than real-life experience to understand cultural differences.

She wants to continue her efforts to develop resources for integrating technology in bilingual instruction, and plans to pursue her Ph.D.

Jeffrey Cougler

Cougler, who holds a BFA in Art and Design from RIT, worked for many years as a successful designer with The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey before he decided to return to RIT to obtain his MFA in Computer Graphics Design. This summer he’s in Rome, Italy, where he’s using his Fulbright scholarship to further develop his thesis project: The ASL Finger Challenge, an online

fingerspelling software program incorporating the latest concepts in animation, video use and interactivity.

Cougler says the Fulbright grant has presented him with an opportunity to create an Italian version of his unique interactive learning software to help students improve their Italian fingerspelling reception.

“Receiving this grant has opened doors for me that I never thought could happen when I first applied,” says Cougler.

When he returns to Rochester this fall, Cougler will finish writing his thesis and is considering pursuing a Ph.D. in linguistics.

When asked what he has learned from his Fulbright experience, Cougler says, “I learned I am capable of living in a place I didn’t think was possible for me, and I have begun to tell others who doubt their dreams that if I can do it, they can too.”

Co-op Students Get Inside Look

by Kathy A. Johncox



Profiting from Co-op Joshua Sannar studies profit and loss reports during his co-op as a financial analyst at Citi's New York offices.

For many recent college graduates, landing their first job is a challenge. They leave college with a lot of learning and training but with little or no work experience—and employers may be reluctant to take a chance on them.

But when graduates have the magic combination of education *and* work experience as they approach their first job, and when they have someone going to bat for them with potential employers, someone working with their best interests in mind, landing that all-important first job can be easier.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing students at RIT benefit from just that magic combination. Required cooperative work experiences (co-ops) with real-world employers plus resources provided by the NTID Center on Employment (NCE) combine to give students the job knowledge and work experience that create great opportunities for them as they start out in the world of work.

Co-op is a tradition at RIT, and is required for most majors. Students spend 10 or more weeks working in their field of study, usually for pay. Since several hundred students need to fulfill this requirement each year, there needs to be a cadre of employers willing to provide the co-op experience.

Recent collaborations between RIT/NTID and Citi (formerly CitiGroup) and IBM have resulted in outstanding opportunities for students both to use their coursework in the real world, and to get a glimpse of where their hard work can take them.

Citi

Citi's partnership with RIT/NTID started four years ago with six interns and has grown to 20 students hired to work in business or information technology fields in Citi's New York City and New Jersey offices this summer. By all accounts, the partnership has been a great success.

"We have had the most fabulous interns from NTID," says Jennifer Kleinert, co-head of Planning and Analysis for Citi's Markets & Banking Division. "They are very eager, have great skills and are very hard-working. And our employees who work with them have all said the experience has been very gratifying for them."

Joshua Sannar from Los Angeles, Calif., is a Finance major who completed a paid co-op at Citi this spring.

"I worked as a financial analyst at Citi, helping support the trade desk by comparing profit and loss reports. My experience there involved understanding how municipal derivatives trade markets work," says Sannar, a fourth-year student. "This co-op helped me determine that I truly chose the right major. Being at Citi challenged me in ways I never thought possible—I am using new computer platforms and really honing my spreadsheet and software skills."

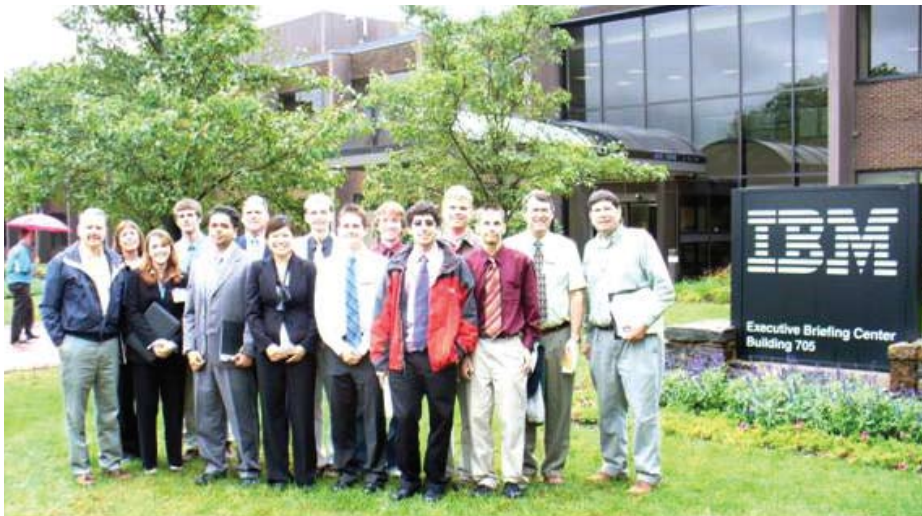
David Plotz, Sannar's manager during his internship in the Municipal Derivatives Product Control group at Citi says Sannar was among the best interns he's had.

"Josh would delve into problems and took total ownership of the process," says Plotz. "His independence of mind was reflected in his work product. He would approach problems analytically and perform due diligence, but he'd also know when to stop what he was doing and ask questions. And he never left for the day without stopping by my office to see if there was anything else I needed. He was great to work with."

IBM

Last fall, IBM hosted RIT/NTID Day for 12 Business, Engineering, and Computer Technology students at their Poughkeepsie, N.Y., offices.

"The event was part of the partnership between RIT/NTID and IBM aimed at bringing talented deaf and hard-of



RIT/NTID Day at IBM Faculty, staff and students traveled to IBM's mid-Hudson Valley facilities where students learned about the different majors that IBM hires at these locations and throughout the country.

hearing students to IBM for co-op and full-time jobs," says Gary Behm, one of the organizers, an RIT alumnus and a member of the 300MM System and Application Architecture Department at IBM.

The day offered tours of the IBM clean room processing center and a discussion of the different majors that may qualify students for employment at that and other IBM locations.

"An event like this can educate students about the appropriate skill set they need to build to be successful working at IBM, and can prepare them for a rewarding work experience," says Behm. "That's what it's all about."

"What I enjoyed the most that day were the presentations given by several IBM employees," says Richard Regan, a third-year Business major. "It really opened my mind about what I would like to do once I am out in the real world."

Preparing for Co-op

Before students get co-ops, there is much to do. They need résumés, interview skills, and job search advice, all of which are available from NCE.

To encourage more students to use these valuable services, NCE organized an open house in February with six different stations, each providing advice and insight into the services students can expect as they start their

co-op or job search. From advice on job search websites, to a video showing successful students at work, to an interview wheel that let students spin and take their chances on answering a tough or typical interview question, more than 70 students stopped in to meet staff and get connected for future job search assistance.

Sannar took advantage of NCE's expertise and services and says, "Linda Iacelli from NCE helped me get this co-op by sending my résumé on to

recruiters at Citi and talking personally with them about my strengths."

Sofia Siliezar, a fourth-year Accounting Technology student and one of the 20 Citi co-op students this summer, learned about her Citi co-op job from students who had worked there previously, and from Kathy Dollinger-Meyer, her NCE employment advisor.

"I love working with numbers, and I wanted a job that would challenge me," she says. "I chose Citi because I wanted the experience of working in a bank to see if I really like it. And I am very excited to be working in New York City."

Students may hope to land a permanent job through a well-performed co-op, and some do. The impact of the relationship building and networking done by NCE with employers, and the preparation and support that students receive in the job search process combine to give young people the opportunity to develop a vision of their future and the means to pursue it.

"NCE has a great group of staff who are really determined to help people accomplish their goals," says Regan. "They helped me with my resume and gave me tips on how to have an effective interview. This whole experience allowed me to visualize myself working as a respectable young man in a nice \$300 suit."



Résumé in Hand Sofia Siliezar chats with employers at the annual NTID Job Fair last fall.

Scott Hansen

by Susan L. Murad



Picture a 5-year-old boy being taught to swing a pint-sized golf club by his grandfather at golf courses in his hometown of Twin Falls, Idaho. That was nearly 20 years ago, yet the image is still fresh in the mind of Scott Hansen, a May Applied Computer Technology graduate, who has grown up to become part of the six-man team that led the USA to victory in the 2006 Deaf World Golf Tournament in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. That same summer, Hansen also competed in an 18-state tournament to defend his individual championship title for the third year in a row, winning in spite of a broken rib.

Hansen went to high school at the Oregon School for the Deaf. While there, his father helped established a golf team on which Hansen played. As he gained experience, Hansen joined local and district golf leagues, and eventually played with the Oregon School Activities Association team.

But this summer, career goals are taking precedence over golf. Instead of being at a qualifying tournament for the 2008 Deaf World Golf Tournament, Hansen will be in New York City on co-op with Citi, pursuing his other passions—cyber security and systems administration.

“Last winter quarter, I decided to focus more on networking and cyber security because I have become so interested in those areas,” he says.

Hansen will either pursue a bachelor’s degree or begin his career in networking and cyber security on the West Coast, to be near his family.

“I’ve learned so much about independence, decision making and time management while I’ve been at RIT. I’m involved in the Christian organization on campus, and I really enjoy the friends I’ve made here – even though the golf season is shorter in Rochester than in California!”

Ricardo Harris

by Susan L. Murad



In Ricardo Harris’ hometown of South Bend, Ind., there’s a sign at the players’ entrance to Notre Dame Stadium that says, “Play Like a Champion Today.” For the 27-year-old Harris, those are words to live by.

The Digital Imaging and Publishing Technology (DIPT) major, who became deaf at 10 months old and began learning ASL at age 16, truly enjoys the creative outlet the program provides.

“I love working in Photoshop® and InDesign®,” he says. “They’re not like work, both are my hobbies.”

Harris was able to put his hobby to use during his co-op as a Lithographic Specialist at the National Aeronautical Charting Office in Washington, D.C.

“The office I worked in was near the White House,” he says. “It was very impressive.”

Harris completed his AOS degree in May, and looks forward to pursuing a BFA at RIT.

“I would like to someday teach kids InDesign or other graphic programs,” Harris says. “My mother is a teacher, and I would like to teach, also.”

When mentioning his mother, Harris’ already-smiling face beams. It’s clear she holds a special place in his heart.

“I took a leave of absence from school to take care of my mother because she was ill,” he explains. “She is doing really well and is back to work. I listened to my mother and did not give up on school.”

Harris has earned the unanimous respect of his professors. At the annual Student Art Awards presentation, he was honored with the “Krizzy Award” given to one student each year who demonstrates character and determination.

“I was so surprised when I won the Krizzy Award,” Harris says with a grin. “When Professor Ed Mineck said that the winner left to take care of his mom, I suddenly realized it was me.

“I really like all the professors in the DIPT program. Even ones I haven’t taken classes with have been very encouraging to me.”

With his positive attitude and the support of family and faculty, Harris proves he plays like a champion in the classroom and in life.

Grace Kennedy

by Kathleen S. Smith

When Laboratory Science Technology student Grace Kennedy, 20, accepted the Overcoming Challenges Award from the American Chemical Society last fall, she moved an audience of more than 300 to tears as she described the importance of perseverance when facing “bumps in the road of life.” The self-assured young woman at the lectern just three years earlier had been a struggling teenager filled with self-doubt about her future.

Born with a rare genetic condition that left her with hearing loss, blindness in her left eye, limited movement of her left shoulder, and only part of a kidney, the Morrow, Ohio, native already had endured years of frustration. Classmates teased her, teachers assumed she had learning disabilities, and fellow teens ridiculed “the short, blind girl who couldn’t hear” when she became a member of the school’s marching band drum line.

She has flourished at RIT, which has

everything Kennedy sought in a college—dozens of technology programs, a large deaf population, an accessible campus and a strong disability services program.

“I cried when I got my acceptance letter,” she says. “I knew that I would finally fit in and be accepted for who I am.”

Kennedy has grown into a focused student of science under the guidance of LST Program Director Todd Pagano.

“In all my years of teaching, I have rarely seen a work ethic and pleasant attitude like Grace possesses,” he says. “Every day she impresses me in new ways.”

Kennedy is a member of Alpha Sigma Theta sorority, the Metal Works Club, the RIT Ambulance Club, and the Kendo Japanese Sword Fighting Club.

Kennedy, who is spending the summer at Stanford University as a research intern, “knows exactly where the road of life can take her,” says Pagano. “And she has the character to get there.”



Latonya Moore

by Ilene J. Avallone

Second-year Applied Computer Technology (ACT) major, Latonya “Tiny” Moore, always knew that she wanted to continue her education after high school.

Moore, from Chicago, Ill., has five siblings, including a twin, and is the only deaf person in her family. As a junior at the Illinois School for the Deaf, Moore attended the RIT/NTID Explore Your Future summer program, and knew immediately after her camp experience that RIT was her college choice.

As the first person in her family to attend college, Moore, 21, says coming to RIT has been one of the best decisions she’s made.

“RIT offered my major, had a nice campus and provided great access services,” she says. “I knew it would present me with many new opportunities.”

Moore realized early on that she wanted to study Web development and design. “I took an HTML coding class in high school and loved it,” she says. “My high school teacher also encouraged me to pursue this major because I had talent in it.”

Her teacher was right. Moore has won an award for being one of the top students in the ACT program, and she has made Dean’s List several times.

A self-described fun person to be around who cares deeply about her family, Moore works as hard outside the classroom as she does in it.

“I am learning so much here at college,” she explains, “such as how to be assertive, make my own decisions and improve my time management skills as well as meet my rigorous academic requirements.”

Time management skills are very important to Moore as she is a member of the Student Life Team and the Deaf Basketball Association, and dance co-captain and executive board member of the Ebony Club.

Moore is accomplishing what she set out to do.

“I’m following my heart and going after what I want,” she says.





Winning Artists Winners of the first-ever national Digital Arts and Animation Competition for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students toured campus, attended various social receptions and posed for photos with Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, RIT vice president and CEO/dean for NTID. Left to right, Brienna Herold, Eliazar Salazar, Warrance Yu, Dr. Hurwitz, Michael Hoyt and Michelle Chung.

Competitions Create Excitement

by Kathy A. Johncox

I felt really awesome when I found out that I won,” says Eliazar Salazar, first place winner in the photo illustration category of RIT/NTID’s Digital Arts and Animation Competition for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students.

The Digital Arts and Animation Competition is one of RIT/NTID’s four competitions for deaf and hard-of-hearing middle and high school students, all of which encourage student interest in important academic subjects and career fields.

“Academic competitions like this have dual objectives,” says Mark Sommer, director of NTID pre-college outreach. “They allow students to feel proud and successful as they start their pre-college journey, and they engage students, enabling them to see themselves in a larger world, that of college and career, much earlier.”

Writing Rules!

The SpiRIT Writing Contest requires that high school sophomores and juniors work with their teachers to submit a portfolio of essays or creative pieces that demonstrate their writing talents and skills. Winners receive

their choice of a scholarship and paid travel expenses to RIT’s Explore Your Future (EYF) Program or a cash prize and an all-expenses-paid visit to RIT.

Essays by winners this year covered a broad range of topics, from Winston Churchill to the Jay Treaty to Arthur Miller.

“I can’t stress enough the importance of good writing skills,” says Kathleen Eilers-Crandall, NTID associate professor of English, and one of the judges. “The beauty of this competition is that it allows students to focus on an area of strength and see the rewards that are possible.”

11th grade winners

Sacha Glasser, Pittsford Mendon High School, Pittsford, N.Y.
Zachary Engstler, South Dakota School for the Deaf, Sioux Falls, S.D.

10th grade winners

Michael Sprouse, Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind, Hampton, Va.
Robert Dooling, Burke High School, Omaha, Neb.

“I entered the writing contest to establish an early connection with my dream school and to get a firsthand look at the efforts required in higher education,” says Robert Dooling. “I am very excited by the opportunity to visit Rochester and get a head start in my college search.”

“I was thrilled to learn that Robby had won,” says his mother, Kristy Dooling, “mostly because I thought it would show him that hard work pays off and would encourage him to keep on writing and improving his skills.

“Also, he has been thinking a lot about the future and college, and is very interested in RIT. For the two of us to be able to visit together, and for Robby to be able to attend EYF, is a true gift.”

Art Rocks!

Nearly 70 students in grades 9–12 submitted projects to compete in the Digital Arts and Animation Competition in categories that included mixed digital media, photo illustration, Web page design, graphic media, 3-D animation, interactive media and free-hand art in digital form. The winners were invited to the RIT campus for an

awards ceremony and to visit labs and attend classes.

“Being able to apply their excellent artistic skills and learning and seeing their results in the real artistic world of work is priceless,” says Sommer. “They can become motivated to work harder in high school to get where they want to go.”

Five first-place winners each received a plaque and \$250.

Michelle Chung, 10th grade, E. C. Drury School for the Deaf, Milton, Ontario, Canada

Brienna Herold, 9th grade, Spring Valley High School, Spring Valley, Wis.

Michael A. Hoyt, 12th grade, Washington School for the Deaf, Vancouver, Wash.

Eliazar Salazar, 12th grade, Robert E. Lee High School, South Houston, Texas

Warrance Yu, 11th grade, E.C. Drury School for the Deaf, Milton, Ontario, Canada

Math Counts!

Thirty-five middle school students from schools throughout New York, Maryland, Florida and California, converged at RIT this spring to compete as individuals and in teams with other Mathletes® to solve a variety of mathematical problems within

designated time periods in the RIT/NTID MATHCOUNTS® competition.

Cash prizes and an Olympic style medal went to individual winners.

1st place –Ted Zoerner, Venado Middle School, Irvine, Calif.

2nd place –Todd Bonheyo, Maryland School for the Deaf, Frederick, Md.,

3rd place – Manual Alvarado, Venado Middle School, Irvine Calif.

First-place winner Ted Zoerner, credits his good luck charm, a small green stone turtle kept in his pocket during the competition, for helping him win.

“I’m very happy I won,” Zoerner says, “I owe my turtle, Lucky 7, a lot.”

Yvonne Swartz, mother of a Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind student, says, “Erica is interested in science and technology, but feels weak in math. This competition was a real self-esteem booster when she was selected for it.”

“To be able to compete with other nations, math is very important,” says Sue Clark, math specialist at the Florida school. “It builds critical thinking skills different from those used in reading and writing.”

Maryland School for the Deaf won for best team performance, Florida

School for the Deaf and the Blind won for having the most spirit, and an honorable mention went to Venado Middle School for math skills.

Science Sizzles!

This spring, students in grades 6–11 competed in RIT’s second National Science Fair for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students and won cash awards of up to \$500.

“Lauren says she entered the science fair because she wanted to win the prize,” says Michele Steele, mother of Lauren Berger, winner in the middle school category. “But she loves science, and it really was very motivating for her, and the research helped her learn new things.”

Middle School

Lauren Berger, 6th grade, Bay Trail Middle School, Penfield, N.Y.

Project Subject: Atoms and Molecules

High School

Max Bartels, 10th grade, Ralph R. McKee High School, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Project Subject: Trauma Repair of the Brain

Team Entry

Model Secondary School for the Deaf, Washington D.C.

Lateefah Patterson, 11th grade

Kelsey Wessman, 11th grade

Project Subject: A Phenology Study of Budburst in Acer Saccharinum and Pyrus Conoaria

“RIT is delighted to host competitions like this to offer excitement and a sense of achievement for students while encouraging them to think about their future,” says Dr. Gerard Buckley, assistant vice president for College Advancement at NTID. “Parents, teachers, and students have been actively participating in and enjoying the opportunity to show the students’ excellent hard work.”

Editor’s Note: For information about 2008 competitions and summer camps for deaf and hard-of-hearing students at RIT, visit www.rit.edu/NTID/Outreach or contact the outreach office at 585-475-7695 (voice/TTY).



Showing Spirit MATHCOUNTS team members from Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind won the “Spirit” award, given to the school whose team showed the most school spirit.

Cochlear Implant Update

by Kathy A. Johncox



Making Adjustments Katie Ahlfield, left, and Catherine Clark, CSS Audiology faculty member, use specialized software as they work together to remap Ahlfield's cochlear implant.

When *FOCUS* published its first article about cochlear implants (CI) in 1999, there were 29 students and one faculty member at RIT/NTID who had opted to use the technology.

Much has changed since then and in the 20 years since the FDA approved CI technology.

There currently are 217 students on campus with cochlear implants, and NTID's Communication Studies and Services (CSS) department has ramped up services and programs to meet the needs of this growing segment of the student population.

There are five CI audiologists on staff, and all CSS faculty and staff are trained and experienced in providing services for students who already have CIs or who are considering that option.

For a long time, Katie Ahlfield, a first-year student in NTID's Laboratory Science Technology program, didn't really use the CI she got at age 13.

"I got one because I was mainstreamed, and I saw all the other students free of interpreters, listening to music and talking on the phone. But the sounds

in the beginning were confusing, and I didn't use it."

When Ahlfield arrived at RIT, she decided her parents had spent a lot of money, and she was going to use it, plus her friends told her about the CI services available on campus.

"When I tried it, it didn't feel right," says Ahlfield, "so I saw Catherine Clark and Dr. Donald Sims of the CSS department, who found it needed a remap. They had just the skill and equipment I needed. Now I even can hear sounds related to the science equipment I use in the lab."

"It's not uncommon for a student to request mapping services," says Catherine Clark, CSS audiology faculty member. "Both recently implanted students and experienced users take advantage of cochlear implant programming, which is provided at no cost to registered students of RIT."

After Mary Karol Matchett, a counselor in the NTID Counseling Services Department, had a CI in 2004, students, faculty, and staff wanted to know all about it, how it worked for her and what benefits she got from it.

They seemed to have an easier time talking with someone who had had a CI than to someone who had not had the experience personally.

That's when Matchett and Sally Skyer, also a counselor in the NTID Counseling Services Department implemented the NTID CI Mentoring Program, a support program that matches an experienced CI user with someone who needs support. Both mentors and mentees complete surveys to facilitate the appropriate match.

Kadie Lapp, from Alburty, Pa., a second-year Business major, says she and her mentor, Jean Spence, an RIT/NTID community educator/consultant, have a lot in common.

"We were both raised in the hearing world, received implants in the 90s, play tennis and love the outdoors," says Lapp. "It's neat to have a mentor older than you, so you can see their successes and what they have been through."

In addition to constant state-of-the-art training and the mentor program, individual communication instruction on pronunciation, pitch, speech reading, vocabulary and more are offered by speech-language pathology faculty and staff as well as information on FM systems and other equipment, and demand for these services continues to increase. Advances in technology make constant training a must for faculty and staff to keep up with the changing landscape of what students need to support CI use.

Ahlfield uses her CI much more now, and her parents are proud of her progress, but her connection to Deaf culture remains strong. Growing up in Hawaii, her mother made sure she was part of the Deaf community.

"My mom had me stay three weeks in a mainstreamed school and one week in a deaf school every month so I could experience Deaf culture," says Katie. "I grew up being deaf. Having an implant doesn't change that."

Student-Centered Research

by Susan L. Murad

NTID has developed a comprehensive, three-pronged approach to research that will result in insights and innovation in how students learn, what types of technologies best enhance that learning, and how current technology can be adapted to benefit teaching and learning.

NTID's newly established trio of research centers are the Department of Research and Teacher Education, headed by Dr. John Albertini; the Center for Education Research Partnership (CERP), headed by Dr. Marc Marschark; and the Center on Access Technology (CAT), headed by former NTID Dean Dr. James DeCaro.

"The viability and credibility of our programs depends on knowing how today's students learn, how best to communicate course content, how to attract future students, and how to prepare students to continue learning

in a global society," says Albertini.

How instructors can provide the best educational opportunities was the topic of the recent Cognitive Underpinnings of Learning by Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students conference hosted this summer at RIT by CERP, co-sponsored by Oxford University Press and supported by a \$149,000 grant from the National Science Foundation.

"CERP was established explicitly with the idea that we would serve as a research incubator to try out new things," Marschark says. "The work we've been doing over the past five years on optimizing student learning in the classroom is yielding rich findings that we can share with students, instructors and interpreters. We believe these findings, when implemented, will show a clear impact on achievement for deaf and hard-of-hearing students of all ages."

Technology already has made great strides possible for deaf and hard-of-hearing people in educational and work settings. The effects of NTID's new research trio is focused on continuing this momentum in an ever-changing world.



Eye Tracker Research conducted at RIT/NTID includes the use of an "Eye Tracker" to follow the eye movements of deaf and hard-of-hearing students as they look from instructor to interpreter to multimedia classroom equipment and to classmates.

Examples of Currently Funded Research Projects

Center for Access Technology

- Speech to Text Systems: Comparative Analysis of Text Generation and Display Methods. A three-year \$269,542 award from the National Science Foundation.
- Directed Acoustic Technology as an Assisted Listening Device for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Population. Investigation of usability of "focused, beam of sound" speaker technology. Equipment donation and consultation from American Technology Corporation.
- OnStar® TTY: Usability Testing and Prototype Development for the Next Generation OnStar®. A project with GM and RIT's Golisano College to investigate accessibility of OnStar® for people who are deaf.

Center for Education Research Partnerships

- Eliminating Technical and Communication Barriers to STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) Education. Supported by an \$883,883 grant from the National Science Foundation, this three-year project, in collaboration with the RIT College of Science, is exploring deaf students' learning in multimedia classrooms containing multiple visual inputs.
- Improving STEM Education for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students. Exploring the cognitive foundations of learning

by deaf and hard-of-hearing students to improve access and learning in STEM classrooms. Supported by a \$996,003 grant from the National Science Foundation.

Department of Research and Teacher Education

- C-Print® Model for Speech-to-Text Support Services with Educational Software and Automatic Speech Recognition: Year Four. To refine, demonstrate and evaluate new speech recognition technology and educational software to provide real-time speech-to-text transcription for deaf and hard-of-hearing college students. Funded by a \$700,000 U.S. Department of Education grant.
- Identifying Developmental Reading Disability in Deaf Students. Investigates the relationship of visual skills deficits to reading disability in deaf students to demonstrate that measuring these skills can help diagnose dyslexia.
- National Center on Deaf Health Research. Focuses on health care and health literacy issues faced by the deaf community. Funded by a \$3.5 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control, the five-year project will help define and prioritize major health issues in the deaf community, and identify barriers to accessing quality health care and information.

John Panara

by Ilene J. Avallone



John Panara believes that teaching English is his destiny.

“I grew up being inspired by literature—even woken up by it,” says Panara, assistant professor in NTID’s Department of Liberal Studies.

“I can remember my father (Robert Panara, NTID’s first deaf faculty member) strolling around the house on weekend mornings, reciting lines from great poets.”

As the hearing son of deaf parents, Panara has a strong bond to the deaf world. His goal has always been to teach deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

“I get my greatest thrill from interacting with students,” says Panara, who joined NTID in 1978 as a training specialist in the tutor/notetaker training program, and now teaches writing. “They keep me young, and inspire me to find new ways to inspire them in the classroom.”

Panara, who holds both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English, says he’s fortunate to teach the subject because he gets to cross paths with so many students.

“When I respond to student writing, I always try to maintain a kind of internal ‘spirit level’ to ensure that my feedback is balanced, noting strengths while also making suggestions for improvement.”

With this degree of commitment, it’s easy to see why Panara is recipient of the NTID Student Congress Outstanding Staff Award, and a two-time recipient of the NTID Student Congress Staff Humanitarian Award.

“Seeing my students not only progress through the writing sequence of courses, but also walk across the stage at graduation and receive their degree, gives me great satisfaction, knowing I played a role in their ascent.”

Panara says RIT/NTID is a special place for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

“This is truly a magical place for them where they get the chance to discover, connect and thrive,” he explains.

“That’s why I always advise students to make the most of it.”

Kathryn Schmitz

by Susan L. Murad



Keeping up with Kathryn (Katie) Schmitz can be challenging. The assistant professor of English at RIT/NTID, is used to being on the go. Born deaf to a hearing family, she grew up in a variety of locales including Germany, finally settling in Potomac, Md. She was mainstreamed in grammar and high school and graduated from Duke University with a bachelor’s degree in English *summa cum laude* with no access or support services. Schmitz was a member of the RIT/NTID Marketing Communications Department and eventually the director (and former editor of *FOCUS* magazine), before making the switch to teaching. She earned a master’s degree at RIT, and is writing her dissertation for her Ph.D. at the University of Buffalo.

“My parents had high expectations for me, and I now have high expectations for my students,” Schmitz says.

“When I moved from Marketing Communications to teaching, I was so humbled,” she says. “I realized I had a lot to learn! But I wanted to participate in the

education of young deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

“After teaching for more than six years now, I’m in a better position to assess and match my students’ needs. I work with whatever skills students bring to the table and try to add to that. This is not just a tremendous obligation—it is a huge opportunity to help change lives—and that’s what keeps me excited about teaching.

“One of the things I love about teaching at RIT/NTID is the range and mix of students who come here with individual challenges – some are great at being able to share their thoughts in ASL, but have difficulty tackling written English, others have mastered written English, but don’t organize their thoughts very well,” she explains.

“Throughout their lives, our students have been confronted by barriers. We are here to provide an opportunity to help them move forward—that is so inspiring.”

Chamoreun Dee

by Susan L. Murad

For some, pulling up to the White House is the stuff of “Kodak Moments”—for Chamoreun Dee, SVP '98, '03, it's just another day at the office.

A systems analyst for the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Dee assists in formulating the OMB's strategic direction for information technology policy and helps guide Enterprise Architecture (EA). He also conducts research and provides federal EA and E-Government answers to seven agencies.

“I also am functioning as the liaison for agency EA activities, the OMB analysts and the OMB Resource Management Office,” he adds. “I audit their annual submission then evaluate and provide the feedback and results to my seven agencies.”

Dee developed an interest in technology during an internship with NASA while at the California School for the Deaf (CSD). The native of Cambodia became deaf at age 2 and moved to the United States with his family two years later. He attended mainstream schools before CSD.

After graduating from RIT with a bachelor's degree in management information systems, Dee received a job offer from the U.S. Department of Transportation, which led to the position at OMB.

“At the White House, I am able to offer my skills to the OMB to advance policy and budget needs. As my career moves forward, I will learn more about the White House environment and audit systems to ensure that all agencies spend their information technology dollars in alignment with their missions.”

The future looks bright for Dee, who will be married this summer. He plans to continue living in the Washington, D.C., area and enjoy golf, running and the relationships he has made.

Editor's Note: At press time, Dee had accepted an information technology position in the private sector at Booz Allen Corporation.



Sara Beth Weiner

by Susan L. Murad

A family trip led Sara Beth Weiner SVP '93, '97, to an open house at RIT/NTID and the beginning of her career.

“At the open house, I met a woman from Admissions who talked about the Explore Your Future summer program, and I enrolled without hesitation,” she says.

After graduating from RIT with a bachelor's degree in Social Work, Weiner went on to earn two master's degrees from Columbia University.

“Learning how to be a leader was one of the best things I learned from RIT,” she says.

Weiner was recently selected as a Fellow for the highly competitive Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Public Health Prevention Program, a three-year training and service program for master's level public health professionals. Only 25 prevention specialists are selected each year to enter the program at CDC headquarters in Atlanta.

Weiner is on field assignment with the Oregon Department of Human Service's Asthma Program and Tobacco Prevention and Education Program.

“My primary research effort is to determine asthma knowledge, skills and beliefs among people with asthma and caregivers of people with asthma in both rural and urban areas, and to gather information on their experiences with the health care system,” she says. “Another research effort is to develop and implement a Web-based ‘quit line’ service offering advice to deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers who are trying to stop smoking.”

Weiner also has been involved with two Oregon Health and Science University grants for enhancing health care access for people with disabilities, and is writing a grant proposal for implementing a video interpretation service for patients who have hearing loss or have limited English proficiency.

Weiner, who lives in Portland, enjoys the outdoors in all seasons, running 5K and 10K races, wine tasting in Oregon's wine region and salsa dancing.

“RIT taught me that you can accomplish the things you want out of life: academics, socializing or professional growth,” Weiner says. “RIT was, for me, a place to gain access to my dreams.”



Delta Sigma Phi Chapter Establishes Scholarship

The alumni of RIT's ETA Chapter of the Delta Sigma Phi fraternity have established a scholarship for deaf and hard-of-hearing student members of their fraternity.

"The goal is to provide for fraternity brothers who come to RIT/NTID and who meet the criteria," says Chapter Adviser and Scholarship Chairman Anthony DiGiovanni, '94, director of business operations at Rochester School for the Deaf.

The scholarship has thus far reached \$15,000. When its \$25,000 goal is reached, it will be matched, dollar for dollar, by a federal matching fund grant.

"This scholarship shows how much we care about the students and our community," Edward "Ted" Lord, SVP '70, '73, faculty adviser and assistant professor of Business, says.

"We'd like to see 100 percent contribution from the chapter," John Austin, SVP '96, '05, co-owner of QuikDrop and chairman of the fraternity's Alumni Corporation Board, says.

"The slogan for our chapter is 'Better Men, Better Lives,'" says Adam J. Clark, chapter president and third-year Computer Aided Drafting Technology student from Westminster, Colo. "We contribute more than 1,000 hours of community service in and around campus."

To contribute to the scholarship fund, please contact Jim Ebenhoch at The NTID Foundation, jbence@rit.edu or 585-475-6304 v/TTY.



Scholarship Leaders Delta Sigma Phi scholarship leaders, left to right, Ted Lord, John Austin, Adam Clark and Anthony DiGiovanni.

In Memoriam

Shortly before press-time, we learned of the loss of a dear friend and long-time supporter of RIT/NTID, Joseph F. Dyer. A full story on his remarkable life and dedication to deaf and hard-of-hearing students will appear in the Fall/Winter issue of *FOCUS*. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and the many friends who will miss him.



Special Evening Benefits Film and Animation Scholarship

A special screening of the award-winning documentary *Hear and Now* took place in RIT/NTID's Panara Theater June 14. Irene Taylor Brodsky, daughter of retired NTID faculty and staff members Paul and Sally Taylor, brought her Sundance Festival-honored film to campus to benefit a film and animation scholarship established in her parents' names.

After the screening, the more than 300 audience members asked Taylor Brodsky and her parents about the film and their lives, and socialized at a reception in the Dyer Arts Center. The event raised more than \$7,000. To contribute to The Paul and Sally Taylor Endowed Scholarship Fund, contact Jim Ebenhoch at jbence@rit.edu or call 585-475-6304 v/TTY.



Foundation Board Exceeds Co-op Goal

At first, the goal seemed ambitious. Last fall, each member of The NTID Foundation Board of Directors committed to finding two contacts for co-op opportunities for RIT/NTID students, with a group goal of 10. By the spring foundation board meeting, the number of contacts had reached 47, and counting.

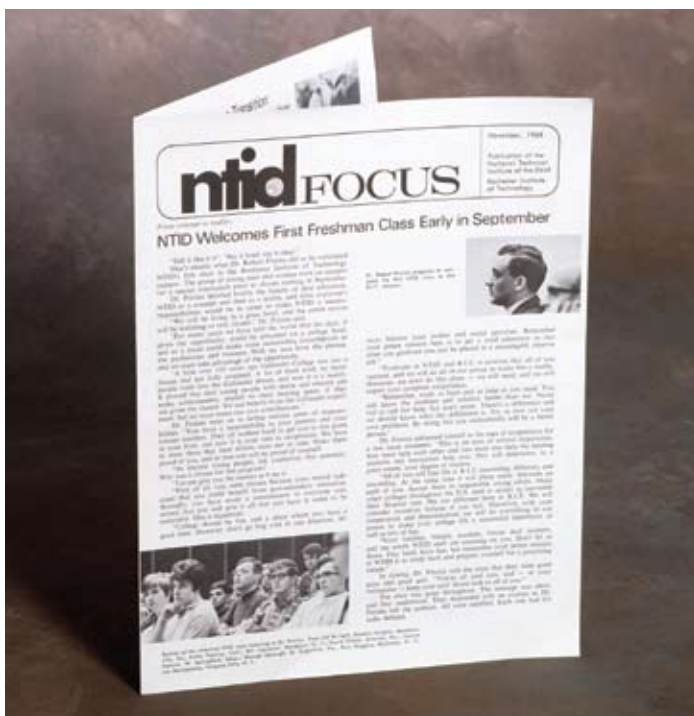
Foundation board member Meredith Crane identified businesses in Columbus that matched the majors offered at RIT and invited them to a luncheon and presentation by NTID Center on Employment (NCE) Counselor Dawn Lucas. As a result of the luncheon, which 30 attended, there are now three

summer cooperative work experiences for NTID students.

"We need to look inside our individual industries as well as outside," foundation board member James Stefano says. "I personally need to break out of the mold in my own thinking."

The goal for this fall's board meeting has been set at 25 new business contacts, and as Crane says, "If we could reach 47 with a goal of 10, just think of what we can do with a goal of 25!"

Deaf Studies Archive Opening



This spring marked the opening of the Deaf Studies Archive at RIT's Wallace Library. The archive documents the history of education and Deaf culture as it relates to the presence of NTID on RIT's campus. The archive houses a variety of materials related to individuals and organizations affiliated with NTID.

"Many NTID faculty have donated items or aided in procuring donations," says RIT archivist and librarian Becky Simmons.

Harry Lang, at the archive opening in photo at top left, donated the first-ever TTY modem.

"This is an important historical artifact, and was a very generous gift on Harry's part," says Simmons. "He originally was going to give it to the Smithsonian."

Other photos on this page show some of the materials from the archive, including the first issue of *FOCUS* magazine, published in November 1968. At the archive opening in photo at top right, is Robert Panara, NTID's first deaf faculty member.



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A Collage of Perspectives Created by RIT and NTID faculty members Thomas Warfield, Aaron Kelstone, Duane Palyka and Luane Haggerty, *Handamation* is a mesmerizing blend of dance, visual theater, and video animation. Featuring the RIT/NTID Dance Company in conjunction with performing and video artists, *Handamation* was performed live on stage at NTID this spring. Through visual communication and kinetic movement, *Handamation* explored the power of images and emotions in everyday life. In a fantastically crafted and vividly colored environment, the dancers, artists and production team presented a uniquely moving performance.