

Support, leadership 'got us back on our feet'

Students attribute positive in-person learning experience to instructors

By Faith Boyum
Managing Editor

2021 may be a new year, but in-person classes such as those from the dental hygiene program continue to follow modifications in order to comply with COVID safety measures.

So far, the modifications seem to be working, although, Jenna Montonye, a student in the dental program, said that these changes in the beginning of last year during the lockdown made things a little complicated.

"It was nerve wracking, at first, since we had no clue how we were going to proceed," said Montonye.

However, she found that the lecture portion of coursework went fine, even though they were not able to practice their clinical skills by working with patients right away.

Starting in August of last year, dental students were able to begin working with patients, which helped make up for what they missed due to the lockdown.

Breana Luschen, a former dental



Luschen

assistant and another current student in the dental hygiene program, noted some of the differences in how classes and clinical experiences are held.

Right now, most classes are hybrid, while labs and clinical experience continue to be in-person.

For labs and clinical experiences, students meet in larger spaces and in smaller numbers to comply with COVID safety rules.

They also wear PPE such as hairnets, shields and N95 masks. In-person courses have been scheduled in such a way as to use resources like PPE efficiently.

Luschen said that some of what makes things more challenging is the time element. It takes more time to set up equipment, and there are more items in the room.

Students need to wear PPE, which is composed of multiple items, and they screen all patients before examining them.

Though training in the program continues, the pandemic did affect some student's ability to take their licensure exams.

"The pandemic did affect the class of 2020 by postponing their licensure exams that normally would have taken place beginning after spring break and right before graduation," said Cherie Fritz, an instructor in the dental program.

However, these students were able to



Submitted photo

Students from RCTC's class of 2020 dental hygiene program take a group photo prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

take the written exam by late May, and they were able to take the practical exam in late July.

Students from the class of 2021, on the other hand, are currently on track to take their licensure exams without delays.

Luschen and Montonye, who are both on track to graduate in May 2021, have liked the program. While Luschen was inspired to pursue further training because she wanted to be able to educate both children and adults in taking care of their teeth, Montonye was originally on a path toward nursing until she discovered dental hygiene, which she decided was a better fit.

"I have recommended other people look

into the [dental hygiene] program." Luschen said.

Though the pandemic may have caused a lot of changes, Montonye attributes her positive experience in the program to the help her instructors provided.

"I want to note that our teachers and clinical staff are what got us back on our feet once we reopened. They worked hard to adapt our program with all the new restrictions and were absolutely amazing about having us all on track and ready for our second year. I am grateful that we had such a supportive group leading us during these crazy times," said Montonye.

Teachers adapt to new normal for in-person classes

By Mark Fantomial
General Reporter

Ever since the pandemic outbreak began, the regular livelihood of people has changed. Essential workers rush to their jobs. Most people work at home, and students have been doing school at home.

It was a relevant shift last spring semester, but as the year progresses, there have been some new changes.

So far there have been multiple delivery methods that are accessible to the RCTC students.

In-person classes were the common option available pre-COVID-19. Hybrid classes are just like in-person classes with a hint of online lectures.

Students normally go to their designated classes, and as they dive into their D2L, there are a few lectures sitting and waiting for them.

Completely Online Synchronous is usually an online class where there are designated Zoom lectures on specified days.

Completely Online Asynchronous is similar, but Zoom lectures aren't involved.

Students who are taking this type of class work on their own time and at their own pace with the given tasks per week.

HyFlex is a new method where the students can test out whether they want to take their classes online via Zoom or attend class in person with face-to-face teaching.

To clarify the differences of the current teaching methods offered, RCTC faculty and instructor of Art + Design Professor

Daniel Vedamuthu answered a few common questions about the updated teaching method (mostly in the art department).



Vedamuthu

Continued on page 2: Professor Vedamuthu explains the different teaching methods and answers some common questions



Continued from page 1

Q&A: Professor explains teaching in the new normal

By Mark Fantonial
General Reporter

Q: Professor Daniel Vedamuthu, what's the difference between teaching a class online and teaching it in person? (Computer as Creative Media 1120)

A: The biggest difference between teaching an in-person and online class (even with a synchronous Zoom meeting) is the immediacy of questions and answers.

In an in-person art class, a student can be working on a project and easily ask a question from peers or instructors. That's all

delayed and lacks immediacy in an online class.

For my classes, the format of lectures is different. I have more assigned reading in online classes (usually something I've written for the students) as opposed to a lecture or demonstration from me.

Q: Does one method have more advantages than the other?

A: Online classes give ultimate flexibility to the students. The student can choose when to work on the projects and be able to

utilize their own supplies and tools.

On the other hand, the benefit for many studio art classes like drawing, painting and ceramics is the facilities that almost no students have access to at home. I can only remember one student who had access to a ceramics kiln at home!

Q: How are in-person classes done?

A: Art classes normally budget one hour of lecture and four hours of studio work time each week. Blended/hybrid classes would meet half of that time. Each instruc-

tor handles the hybrid class time differently.

Q: Are there other teachers doing in-person classes that aren't hybrid?

A: There are fully in-person classes taking place at RCTC. You'll find them in a variety of different departments. Art does not have any in our department.

It's unclear where this year may lead, but teachers and students are adapting to the new environment in a variety of ways, including new class formats such HyFlex.



Virtual Student Success Day was a success

By Tim Galvin
Editorial Assistant

Student Success Day Spring 2021 has come and gone, and it was fun.

For the uninitiated and first-time students, Student Success Day (SSD) is a day dedicated to helping students adjust to college.

This year, because of COVID and the safety precautions, Student Success Day was all virtual.

One of the sessions offered was "Success in Online, HyFlex or Hybrid Math Class," which went over tips and strategies for doing well in math courses at RCTC.

In addition to learning strategies and adjusting to college life at RCTC, many instructors give out extra credit for attending these sessions, such as in my math class, MATH 99, which is a remedial math course for Intermediate Algebra.

My instructor gave extra credit for attending the session, "Success in Online, Hyflex or Hybrid Math Class."

Do keep in mind that most instructors will want proof that you attended the course. This can be anything from a screenshot to forwarding the post-SSD email to your instructor. The post-Student Success Day email goes over what the session was and is confirmation of a student's attendance.

Not only is Student Success Day fun, but it gives students real strategies to help them.

With most classes being at least partially online and on-campus instruction and activities reduced, it can feel overwhelming with all the amount of work that has to get done.

I can personally attest that Student Success Day does help. I've attended every SSD since I've been at RCTC, and I started last year, spring 2020. I've learned valuable strategies that help me to this day.

So, if you're still on the fence, try it out in fall 2021. You might learn something valuable. I know I sure have.

RCTC winter/spring sports season resumes

By Connor Vlasaty
General Reporter

On January 11, RCTC women's basketball, men's basketball and men's wrestling got their schedules for the upcoming winter/spring season.

"We were able to start practice on January 11th, but before that we had three weeks of practice before the Thanksgiving shut-down," said Travis Rutt, the former men's wrestling coach.

Rutt believes that the team will perform well this season, even when they are against scholarship schools and are affected by COVID protocols on and off the mat.

Their schedule has been constantly changing, and tournaments have been restructured to accommodate the COVID protocols, which have changed multiple times. So far, no one has tested positive for COVID, although the players are required to test three times a week.

Jason Bonde, coach of the women's basketball team, also



Bonde



Photo courtesy of RCTC Athletics Department

has expectations for the team.

"I think that all of our teams have high expectations. There have been a lot of great teams at RCTC, and I feel that expectations are always high. We have a young team full of all freshmen and one sophomore. We are learning what it takes to play at a high level everyday, and they are doing a great job," said Bonde.

The team started the season at 4-0. Bonde said that the athletic trainer, Greg Holm, and the athletic director, Mike Lester, have been working to make sure that they follow the COVID protocols from the MDH, which

includes testing three times a week like the players on the wrestling team.

"We are doing everything we can to stay safe, and we are happy to be on the floor playing," said Bonde.

Players from the women's basketball team are looking forward to the season.

"It feels so good to be back and playing again. We have been waiting for a long time to be able to play in a game," said forward Olivia Christianson.

"It feels great to finally be able to play again because it's been awhile since I've played and finally getting back on the court

and doing what I love is a very fun and enjoyable moment," said Guard Myia Ruzek.

The players are excited to be back and playing, although the COVID safety rules have affected how they practice and play on and off the court. Guard Ravyn Miles said the since there are only eight players on the team, they try very hard to follow the rules so that they will not lose the chance to play.

"It would be awesome to have as many fans as we want at our games or to not have to wear a mask at all times, but we are pushing through it and will continue to do so as long as needed!" Miles said.

Center Kandace Sikkink noted that bonding and connecting with teammates is different, too.

"Some team bonding things we could be doing like going out to eat we can't do, but hopefully, things will change soon!" Sikkink said.

The players and coaches stated that they are staying positive and thankful that they are able to play this season, despite the circumstances they are dealing with. At the time of this article, the men's wrestling team had just earned a win, and the men's basketball team was off to a 1-1 start on their season.

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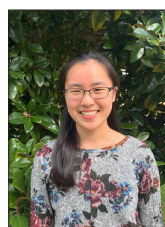
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Graphic by Mark Fantonial

Wellness takes a front seat

By Breanna Shen
Guest Writer

During this pandemic, health has been a big topic. We've certainly received an intense crash course on how to stay safe from the virus and fit during quarantine.



Shen

All for good reason. In fact, it shouldn't have taken a pandemic for many of us to realize the utmost importance of health, not only in terms of avoiding COVID, but also with a focus on wellness in the long run.

The absence of health, as COVID patients have exemplified on a catastrophic scale, teaches us a bitter lesson on the value of health.

The ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus reasoned that happiness is the absence from pain, for, "when pleasure is present, so long as it is uninterrupted, there is no pain either of body or of mind or of both together."

Arguments on whether this is the sole meaning of happiness aside, we can agree that our most comfortable state is when nothing is bothering us either physically or emotionally. Indeed, wellness is two pronged, encompassing the overall health of our mind and body.

Not only is health an important factor in happiness, but it is also the most valuable asset we have in achieving our goals professionally and financially.

Capital, education and even time are crucial factors, but our healthy being is the driving force to wield these ingredients and meld them together into a brilliant career.

This is the message I took to heart

from Paul Kalanithi's poignant memoir, "When Breath Becomes Air."

The neurosurgeon reflects on his all-too-brief journey where cancer shatters his future just as he is finishing medical residency.

Though on the cusp of completing his medical education, earning a six-figure salary and taking off on a brilliant career in medicine and research, his health does not permit it.

Kalanithi reflects on the weariness and the toll that illness took on his last months, taking away his energy to accomplish things even as time dragged by.

He ultimately passes, leaving the memoir unfinished. Inspirational and moving, this tale is a haunting counterexample that emphasizes the utmost importance of health.

During the isolated online work and study habits brought on by the pandemic, wellness easily slips into the backseat. Mounds of tasks, volumes of schoolwork and even endless COVID updates occupy us.

In this melee, wellness tips are forgotten. Shoulder pain, eye strain and carpal tunnel syndrome all result from extensive computer work without breaks. I've recently experienced these maladies; preventing them would indeed be a boon for happiness and productivity.

Dental health might also escape our notice. Perhaps some students are sporting rotting cavities and cracked molars from snacking all day and anxiety-induced teeth clenching at night.

"Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise," the adage instructs. Coincidence or not, "healthy" comes first and then the wealth and wisdom will follow. Wellness is simply that important. Let's take care of ourselves.

Breanna Shen is a guest writer and former Arts and Entertainment editor for The Echo.

Have an opinion? We want to hear it

The Opinion pages are where The Echo encourages perspectives on different points of view. Here's how to get involved.

Letters to the editor: We welcome letters of up to 250 words on campus issues and current events of national and international interest.

Please include your name and phone number for verification. Letters that are respectful and civil will be

given priority. Letters will be edited for grammar, clarity and conciseness.

Guest columns: We also welcome guest columns on important public issues. Ideal length is up to 600 words.

Send letters and columns to rctcecho@gmail.com or hand-deliver them to the Echo office at Art Hall 402. We encourage letter writers to include a photo for use with their letters or guest columns.

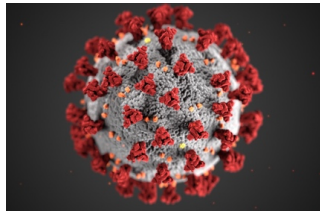


COVID-19 Vaccination Myths

Chelsey Mueller

Myths Surrounding the COVID-19 Vaccine

Everyone is familiar with the virus causing a global pandemic: SAR-COV-2, otherwise known as COVID-19 or coronavirus. COVID-19 emerged in early 2020 and changed the way humans live their life on a day-to-day basis. The world is a completely different place, today, from just a year ago. Along with change and uncertainty

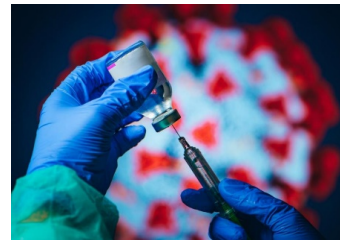


comes fear and oftentimes widespread misinformation. At the beginning of the pandemic, not much was known about the virus and the treatments were essentially non-existent. However, using clinical research, extensive testing, and evidence-based practice, scientists and pharmaceutical companies were able to successfully develop a vaccination (acquired immunity) to slow the spread of the lethal virus. Health care workers, front line workers, or those who are in direct patient care are now eligible to receive the COVID vaccine. Eventually the vaccine will become available to the elderly and general public.

The best way to inform and assure those who are unsure about whether or not to be vaccinated is to use research-based knowledge and help those understand why the vaccine production is ethical and safe. There are two major pharmaceutical companies that produce the COVID-19 vaccine: Moderna and Pfizer. "Many pharmaceutical companies invested significant resources into quickly developing a vaccine...the emergency situation warranted an emergency response, but that does not mean that companies bypassed safety protocols or didn't perform adequate testing" (Mayo Clinic). The COVID vaccine went through the same rigorous testing before being presented to the public as any other modern vaccination you may receive has.

Eligible frontline workers, such as nurses, doctors, and other health care personnel are receiving their two-dose vaccination as it is available, but unfortunately, there are many myths about the COVID-19 vaccination. Common myths and misconceptions surrounding the vaccine include that previously having COVID means you do not need the vaccine, getting the vaccine means you can stop wearing your mask, the vaccine gives you COVID-19, the side effects of the vaccine are dangerous, and the vaccine contains controversial substances.

MYTH ONE: *Previously having COVID-19 means that you do not need the vaccine.* "People who have gotten sick may still benefit from getting vaccinated. Re-infection with COVID-19 is possible...there is not enough information to say how long people are protected from getting COVID-19 after they have had it (natural immunity)" (Kelen & Maragakis).



MYTH TWO: *Getting the vaccine means you can stop wearing your mask and following safety protocols.* "Vaccines do not stop the coronavirus from entering your body; they only prevent you

from developing moderate to severe COVID-19. It's not yet clear if people vaccinated can still carry and transmit the virus, even when they themselves don't get sick".

MYTH THREE: *The vaccine gives you COVID-19.* "The vaccine cannot and will not give you COVID-19. The two authorized mRNA vaccines instruct your cells to reproduce a protein that is part of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, which helps your body recognize and fight the virus, if it does come along".

MYTH FOUR: *The side effects of the vaccine are dangerous.* "The COVID-19 vaccine can have side effects, but the vast majority are very short term—not serious or dangerous. The vaccine developers report injection site pain, body aches; headaches or fever, lasting for a day or two. These are signs that the vaccine is working to stimulate your immune system".

MYTH FIVE: *The vaccine contains controversial substances.* "The first two COVID-19 vaccines to be authorized by the FDA contain mRNA and other, normal vaccine ingredients, such as fats (which protect the mRNA), salts, as well as a small amount of sugar. The vaccines were not developed using fetal tissue, and they do not contain any material, such as implants, microchips or tracking devices".

Whether or not you want to receive the COVID-19 vaccination is a personal choice. However, it is important to base your decision on evidence-based practice and research, if you have any concerns surrounding getting vaccinated. *Knowledge is power.*

RCTC Field House houses mass COVID-19 vaccination clinic



Photo courtesy of RCTC College Relations

More than 2,000 Olmsted County employees showed up at the RCTC Field House earlier this month for a mass COVID-19 vaccination clinic.

An evening of inspiration with OAKS scholarship celebration

By RCTC staff

Rochester Community and Technical College Foundation has announced the 21st Annual OAKS Scholarship Celebration scheduled for March 18.

This virtual event highlights the achievements of four students who have overcome adversity in their lives by dealing successfully with significant obstacles and persevering to stay on a path to personal and academic achievement.

Representing Rochester and the surrounding communities, one local high school senior, Brynn Fritsche, and three first-year RCTC students, Nicole Beyer, Bryan Chase and Kamron Harris, will each receive a \$2,500 scholarship to either begin or continue their education at RCTC.

ABC 6 News, Mayo Clinic, Reagan Outdoors, and RCTC, this year's platinum sponsors, will be also be joined by businesses and leaders from our community for this event which benefits the

Rochester Community and Technical College Foundation in its mission to administer scholarships and provide program support.

About the RCTC Foundation

Established in 1961, the Rochester Community and Technical College Foundation celebrates a legacy of higher education and training for learners of all ages.

Through scholarships and program support, the RCTC Foundation helps sustain a dynamic and progressive presence in the lives of all who come to RCTC.

As a 501(c)3 corporation, the RCTC Foundation can obtain and accept donations on behalf of the college and all gifts are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

For more information, visit the RCTC Foundation website at rctc.edu/foundation or call (507) 281-7771.

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Scholarships provide relief for RCTC students

By Connor Vlasaty
General reporter

Every year, RCTC offers scholarships for incoming, current and transferring students.

There are many different opportunities and scholarships to apply for that will help with many of the expenses that come with college.

Scholarships range from \$200 to \$5,000 and are avail-

able for full-time and part-time students.

For RCTC student Chanraska Phann, the honor of getting a scholarship means a lot to her.

"The scholarship does help me so much with my school supplies such as textbooks and tuition," Phann said.

"Nursing books are very expensive," she added. "This scholarship helps me out a lot in this case. I am so happy, and I appreciate it very much!"

Phann, who is a nursing major, is enrolled in the LPN program. She hopes to enter the RN program after she graduates from the LPN program.

Students can apply online at rctcfoundation.awardspring.com where they will log in with their school email.

Every spring, RCTC announces the winners of scholarships.



Phann

The monster that is money

Zoom session eases students questions, concerns about money

By Ilwad Salex
General reporter

Money. Some love it. Some might hate it, but regardless, it's undeniable the power it has on the world today.

From getting groceries to renting an apartment or even getting a snack before that 12 p.m. class, you usually need money to do it.

With the thought of money, there comes many thoughts. People want to know how they can obtain it, spend it maybe even keep it. Regardless, learning more about money and how to deal with it is always a good choice.

On January 26, RCTC held a Student Life event through Zoom called, "Money Isn't Scary." Rachel Sheerin facilitated this event and was willing to help those who wanted help with some money questions.

During the session, Sheerin put a big emphasis on remembering that money isn't this big scary monster that many believe it to be and that how you perceive money shouldn't negatively define you. Especially in educational

environments like colleges, money is a huge topic.

It's easy to let yourself get consumed by the thoughts of tuition, rent and money for food.

"However, it's also important to be able to take that step back and let yourself breathe from the stress," said Sheerin.

Her Zoom session included her own personal experiences with money, and she was excited to see the similarities and differences she shared with the audience.

The session focused on helping students understand money's place in their worlds.

"You're not supposed to know. You're not behind," said Sheerin.

She made it clear that it is okay to be unaware and full of questions about money, and she wanted an open, safe environment to make it easy for the audience to ask questions.

RCTC's Student Life department offers events like this to go to on a variety of topics.

If you are interested attending one, make sure to visit the Student Life page on the RCTC website.

Echo Eavesdrops

Person A: "What am I eating?"

Person B: "It looks like really sad lasagna."

-- Student and teacher on Zoom

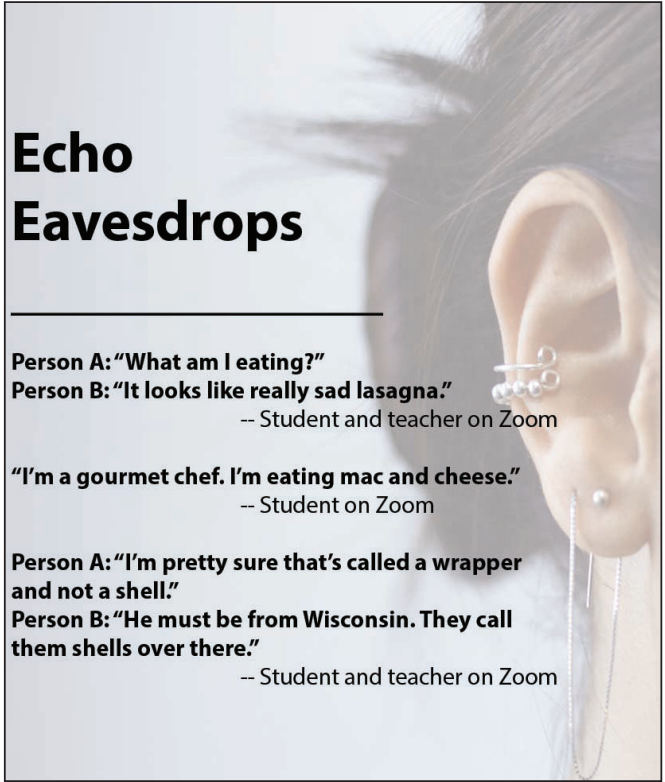
"I'm a gourmet chef. I'm eating mac and cheese."

-- Student on Zoom

Person A: "I'm pretty sure that's called a wrapper and not a shell!"

Person B: "He must be from Wisconsin. They call them shells over there."

-- Student and teacher on Zoom



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6 films to celebrate Black History Month

By Ilwad Salex
General Reporter

“Harriet” (2019)

About: This movie follows Harriet Tubman through her escape from slavery and her famous underground railroad journey.



Rating:

8.5/10

It was a good movie. One thing I would recommend, though, if one chooses to watch the movie, is to read up on Harriet Tubman's story in real life. I felt that the movie no matter how hard it tried, didn't capture everything.

“Hidden Figures” (2016)

About: Three incredibly smart women work at NASA as human computers. They did all the hard math work NASA needed. We follow their story as they help their nation try to win the Space Race.

Rating:

9.5/10

I enjoyed the movie thoroughly. There were happy moments and sad moments. This movie would be a great pick for a family movie night.



“The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson” (2017)

About: This documentary follows a beautiful transgender woman whose death caused controversy across communities. Although it was initially ruled a suicide, many believed she was murdered.

Rating:

9.5/10.

This documentary was very informative on the impact Marsha P. Johnson had on the Black transgender women community and was eye-opening on the cruelty of the world.



“13th” (2016)

About: This documentary follows the pathway from racial injustice and the 13th amendment to mass incarcerations in prisons that we see today.

Rating:

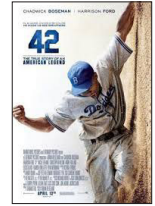
10/10

I really liked it, and it was an extremely telling movie.



“42” (2013)

About: This movie stars the late Chadwick Boseman as Jackie Robinson who was the first African American Major League Baseball player of the twentieth century. Facing hardships and trials



(and lots of racism), Jackie holds his ground and lets his natural talent wow the world.

Rating:

10/10

In all honesty, I expected this movie to be a bit boring. However, the acting was beautifully done, and the story line was well thought out.

“When They See Us” (2020)

About: This four episode show tells the story of a group of Black boys who were falsely accused of heinous acts. Named the



“Central Park 5,” their story represents the injustice Black people have and still do face in the U.S.

Rating:

10/10

I know this isn't technically a movie, but consider this an honorary mention. The actors did such a great job in portraying the raw emotion of their characters. We even get to see the real-life people whom the actors played. If you do watch this (and please do!), I 100% recommend you do some research on the real-life story as it is very eye-opening.

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“What it actually is”



“What some people see”

Illustration by Mark Fantonial

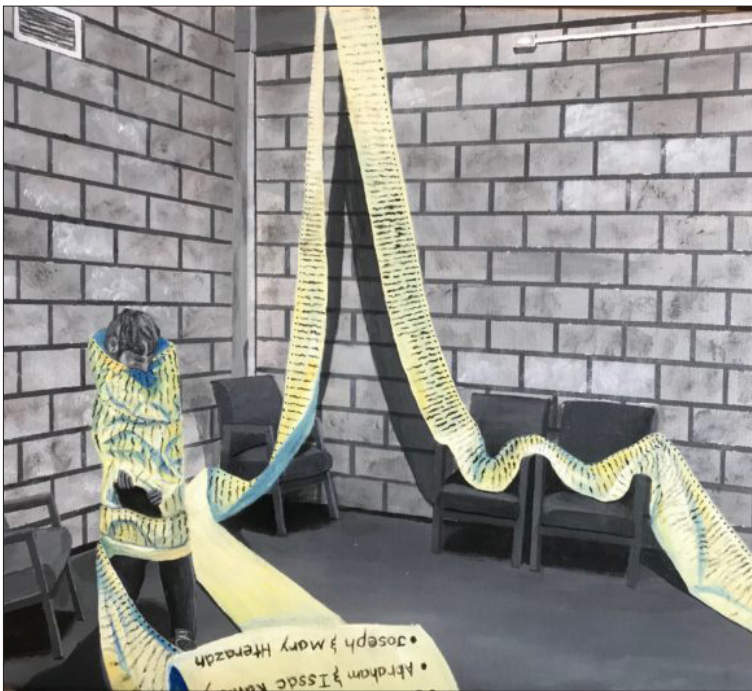


Photo courtesy of Rochester Art Center

Local exhibit features work of former RCTC student

RCTC grad Kieran McDonnell is an emerging artist and painter based in Winona, Minnesota. One of his latest series of paintings and mixed media is currently featured at the Rochester Art Center. The exhibit, *Scrupulosity*, runs through March 7.

“Through my art practice I explore a variety of themes including my Catholic faith, politics, justice, mental illness, nature and personal life experiences,” McDonnell said in a statement to the Art Center.

McDonnell received a Bachelor of Arts degree in studio art from Winona State University and an Associate of Fine Arts from RCTC.

Before relocating to Winona, McDonnell exhibited his work throughout the region at the Watkin’s Gallery, Weber Gallery, Garage Co-work Space, and the RCTC Art Gallery.

Recent works were featured in the Rochester Festival virtual art exhibition.

McDonnell is a 2019 recipient of the South-eastern Minnesota Arts Council grant for emerging artists.

Learn more about the exhibit and hear McDonnell talk about his work online at rochesterartcenter.org/exhibition/kieran-mcdonnell.

History of Nursing

Anya Hartzler

Early Life

The Clara Barton, Missing Soldiers Office Museums gives insight to her life before she was a leader in nursing.

Clara was born in 1821 and was the youngest of four children. She had her first taste of nursing when she helped her brother recover after he fell of the barn roof.

When she went into a vocation, she became a teacher. Clara taught students at a public school in Bordentown, New Jersey.

She left that position when the school hired a male teacher and paid him twice what they had been paying her.

After leaving, she got a job in the US Patent Office. She was treated as an equal, but not for very long as the manager that treated her with respect left.

Then she dealt with more inequality at her job (Clara Barton - Biography).

Her Contribution to Nursing

The Civil War began and Clara knew she wanted to help. She left her job and made it her mission to aid the soldiers by bringing them dressings and supplies.

She decided she wanted to do more to help the soldiers on the front lines and began working with medical people to help soldiers.

She did not have any formal education in nursing but learned by being hands-on and helping in medical tents.

After the war she went to Europe to take a vacation and ended up learning more about the International Red Cross.

When she came back to America, she established the American Society of the Red Cross. She was the elected president and maintained her position in the Red Cross until 1904.

Throughout that time, she also was a big supporter in women’s suffrage and established the national First Aid Association of America (Clara Barton - Biography).

She was such a brave woman at a time when women had many challenges. She left her mark by helping in a crisis and forming organizations that are still helping so many to this day.

Resources

Clara Barton - Biography. Clara Barton Museum. <https://www.clarabartonmuseum.org/bio/>.

Plan ahead with budget-friendly prep ideas

By Shannon Sullivan
Mindful Money Management

Whether it is practicing for a job interview, studying for a test, or setting aside extra money each month into a savings account, being prepared can help alleviate some pressure during stressful times.

As we have seen in recent weeks, there are uncontrollable circumstances we may encounter. This is a good reminder to review or create your own emergency preparedness plan.

Here are some ideas to help maintain a frugal budget while protecting your basic needs.

1. If you are a renter, consider renters insurance.

Renters insurance is typically very affordable for most budgets and is essential in some property rental agreements.

Start with your car insurance company and see what rates are quoted — perhaps there is a bundling option.

2. Have a small amount of cash on hand, kept in a secured spot in your home.

Along with cash, having any important documents protected is encouraged. A fire/waterproof safe may be one of those items to consider putting on a gift wish list.

3. Food and water.

As we saw with the onset of the pandemic, items may be picked over or difficult to purchase in emergency times.

I would recommend having an ample supply of drinking water on hand.

Being prepared to take care of your hydration needs for a few days will buy time should an occurrence happen as did in Texas.

Adding a couple of gallons of water to your grocery stops over the next month will still allow a grocery budget to be maintained.

The same is true for food products. A good way to start a small food preparedness

is to utilize buy-one, get-one free sales.

With the “free” item, stash it away in a designated area or tote to be used in emergency. Set a reminder to check the expiration dates and if it is getting close, rotate your supply.

4. First aid and safety items are great to purchase when they’re on sale at department retail locations.

Using loyalty cards can ease the financial strain. Check out blogs for ways to maximize your savings at popular retail stores as they will provide a step-by-step guide on how to use loyalty points with products.

5. Communicate.

Communication is free and probably the most important step on the list.

Sharing plans on how situations will be handled will be the ultimate form of preparedness.

Shannon Sullivan is a Student Services Specialist at Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science in Rochester, Minnesota.

RCTC nursing students achieve 100% pass rate on board exams

By RCTC staff

RCTC recently announced that 100 percent of its associate degree (Registered Nurse) candidates passed the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCLEX-RN) exam on their first try between Oct. 1, 2020 through Dec. 31, 2020.

In addition, 100 percent of RCTC’s practical nurse candidates passed the national NCLEX-PN exam on their first attempt during this same time period.

RCTC’s associate degree in nursing NCLEX-RN pass rate of 100 percent was one of five associate degree nursing programs in the state to achieve this pass rate.

RCTC’s practical nursing program NCLEX-PN pass rate of 100 percent was among seven to achieve this pass rate in Minnesota practical nursing programs.

For further information on RCTC’s associate degree in nursing or its practical nursing program, contact at www.rctc.edu or call 507.285.7557.

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Staff editorial: How to survive 2021

By Faith Boyum
Managing Editor

Congratulations! You survived 2020.

The past year has not been easy for anyone. The social isolation due to the pandemic has taken its toll on people's mental and emotional health and trying to adapt to distance learning formats has been difficult for many teachers and students.

In addition, 2020 saw a rise in political and racial tensions. For some, it may have either caused or called attention to divisions within families, adding more stressors to people's emotional health.

All in all, it was a tough year. Many of you may feel like you are struggling.

Some of you may think that normally you manage stress and wonder why now it is coming to head. Considering what 2020 was like, it is understandable.

However, you're still here. You made it through the fall semester, which brought a lot of changes in how classes were conducted and how business on campus

proceeded.

Perhaps you do not feel resilient, even though you've made it this far, or you are wondering how you will survive 2021. What are some things that might help?

If you are finding the social isolation difficult, connecting with your friends online may be something to try.

Since this past year, many of us have begun using Zoom frequently for class and for work, and some may have used it for socialization purposes.

This is an easy way to safely chat with friends, and it allows you to virtually meet with multiple friends compared to Face-Time or Skype. All it takes is an account, which you can set up for free.

Perhaps your struggle is that your friends are too busy.

Or you don't have very many friends, and it is difficult to make new ones in the middle of a pandemic.

Setting up virtual study sessions with classmates might be something to try. It

can give you some of that human interaction you need as well as build camaraderie with your classmates and help you learn the material for your class.

Perhaps, it feels like you have tried some of these things, and they haven't worked or are not enough.

Please don't hesitate to talk to a counselor. They can help you process what you are going through and help you figure out the next steps.

RCTC offers mental health counseling services, and the counselors can help you with a referral if needed.

To set up an appointment, call 507-285-7260.



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