

At MCC, You're Never Too Old To Learn



Manchester Community College graduate Jennifer Weigold along with her classmates make their way to the forty-ninth Commencement Exercises Thursday evening. (David Butler II)

By JOSEPH A. O'BRIEN JR.

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It would be a mistake to think of the division of continuing education at Manchester Community College as being for working adults only. Continuing education as defined here is for everyone who wants it regardless of whether you are 5 years old or 95 years young.

While workforce development is a mainstay of continuing education at MCC, the program has evolved to address a wider range of community educational needs that may surprise you.

Above all, the focus is really on lifelong learning.

Where else could a fifth-grader learn how to audition for a school play; or a weekend chef discover the nuances of Creole versus Cajun cooking; or a middle manager perfect the leadership and motivational skills needed for career advancement? How about reading blueprints?

"We have the whole gamut," Melanie Haber, dean of continuing education at MCC, said of college's program. "Not everything we do relates to jobs."

While it may not be everything, it certainly is a lot.

MCC has been chosen to oversee implementation of a \$15 million grant that will expand Connecticut's advanced manufacturing center initiative to all 12 community colleges in the state, including Manchester. The centers, which have proven successful, are in operation at Asnuntuck Community College in Enfield, Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport, Naugatuck Valley Community College in Waterbury and Quinebaug Valley Community College in Danielson.

The money will pay, in part, for equipment used in training teachers and development of apprenticeship programs for high-demand manufacturing jobs that await the tech-savvy machinist.

An advanced manufacturing center will enhance the existing program that includes credit-free courses for professional and personal development, workplace training, computer training, allied health studies, credit-extension courses and "Excursions in Learning," a selection of courses for high-achieving and academically motivated children.

Hundreds of self-supporting, noncredit courses are listed each spring and fall semester and during the summer and winter terms. In addition to allied health and nutrition, there are courses in arts and crafts, creative writing, culture and history, dance, drama, family finance, photography, gardening and languages. The most popular courses include boating, motorcycle training and real estate.

There is also the added convenience of online learning, known as the Online Academy, that offers six-week courses that include the fundamentals of accounting, drawing and screen writing, computer basics, web design and graphics, digital imaging, computer programming, grant writing, photography and languages. Internet access, email and a web browser are required.

Online career training programs that come with a certificate of completion once you successfully finish the work include medical coding for hospitals and physicians offices and bookkeeping.

Even though most but not all of the courses are noncredit some, once successfully completed, become a so-called "stackable credential," such as an industry-accepted certification or skill that can be used sooner rather than later in the marketplace. In the allied health field, you can work toward certification as a nurse's aide, emergency medical technician, pharmacy technician or phlebotomist, which is someone who draws blood, and get a job in one of these fields while working toward a college degree or just considering a career path.

"It's about making you more marketable," Haber said. "It is also an added benefit to your employer."

MCC is known in the higher-education trade as a comprehensive community college in that the credits earned for a two-year associate's degree conferred by the school are generally transferable to a four-year institution if a student chooses to pursue a bachelor's degree. Its degree programs, however, are designed to prepare students to enter the workforce. It also offers remedial education classes for high school graduates not academically ready for college.

Its continuing education program, however, not only serves the demands of students it also tries to meet the needs of the everyday inquiring mind. One goal of the continuing education is to help people develop marketable skills while another is to just help them develop and grow as a person, Taber said.

Application deadlines for those taking courses for personal enrichment are flexible, meaning you can sign up right up until the class begins, but you run the risk of being shut out of the class fills up early.

Balancing a community's educational needs and wants is a role that community colleges have grown into. MCC also provides in-service training for state employees.

"We provide training for our businesses," Taber said. "They call us and we will develop a curriculum to meet their specific needs ... we can deliver the training to their place of business or their employees can come here."

How's that for service?

The popularity of the college's noncredit course selection has given rise to the Organization of Active Adults that offers members, who pay a \$15 annual membership, rebates of 20 percent on the fees charged for credit-free courses. The rebates are capped at \$50 per year. Those 62 and older may be eligible for tuition waivers from the college.

The OAA, whose motto is "Never Stop Learning," has been going strong since 1983. In April, it lost its oldest member, Frances Segal, who was 104. Segal enrolled at MCC when she was 85 and became the oldest student at MCC to earn an associate's degree.

On the opposite end of the life continuum is the college's "Excursions In Learning" youth program, headed by Carleigh Schulz. The program is designed to stimulate the minds of inquisitive children from kindergarten through the eighth grade.

This fall, the youngest were introduced to graphing and measuring, stage makeup, fossils and dinosaurs; the third- through fifth-graders worked with acrylic paints, learned artists' tricks for introducing the illusion of depth in two-dimensional drawings and were introduced to computer programming. The older children learned about computer animation, the microscopic world and cooking.

"Lifelong learning," the stated goal of the continuing education program at MCC, starts with the children, Taber said. "We are into development helping people to develop regardless of the stage (in life) they are at."

It only finishes when a person chooses to stop, which some never do.

Information about the continuing education program at Manchester Community College is available online at <http://www.manchestercc.edu/continuing-education/> or by calling the division at 860-512-2800. The division offices can be found in the John V. Gannon Continuing Education Center, located in the Learning Resource Center.

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FOOD & DRINK

Viron Rondo holds an order of "My Mother's Chips," slices of fried eggplant and zucchini chips. Rondo, proprietor of Viron Rondo Osteria in Cheshire, said his mother made similar chips as a treat when he was young. (Nick Caito)

Affordable With A Creative Menu At Viron Rondo Osteria [+](#)

by FRANK COHEN

Located just barely within the New Haven County line in Cheshire, in the space that formerly housed Luca Ristorante and Brix Restaurant before that, is eponymous Viron Rondo Osteria. The location may seem remote to some, but it's easily accessed from Exit 3 (Highland Avenue) of I-691, making it...

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Two Sides To The Russo's Bakery Story: Exceptional Pastries And Pizza 🍕

Although some bakeries keep less-than-complete hours, Russo's Bakery in Enfield is a welcome exception. Owned by Suffield residents Giovanni and Rosanna Russo, the pastry shop is open seven days a week — Mondays from noon to 8 p.m., Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.,...

Creative Twists On Cajun And Creole Cuisine, And All That Jazz 🍷


A dining establishment that wears its music-loving heart on its sleeve is Scatz Restaurant & Jazz Lounge in Middletown. Even the "S" in its signage resembles a treble clef. Inside this restaurant that opened in June 2013, contemporary paintings of jazz musicians drive the theme home. A slightly...

Explore The Enticing Flavors Of Peru At Vista Alegre

Most Hartford-area foodies with a love of Peruvian fare are likely aware of Cora Cora in West Hartford and the Piolin restaurants in Hartford and East Hartford. But mentions of Vista Alegre usually draw blank looks.

50 West Bistro, Plainville

My adventure began with a couple of discreet review visits to Plainville and ended with a return trip for a raw oyster and clam blowout. Located next to Red Zone Sports Grill & Lounge and sharing the same parking, 50 West Bistro sometimes likes to offer a Thursday all-you-can-eat oyster and...

› Pictures: 50 West Bistro, Plainville  GALLERY


Bobby V's Restaurant & Sports Bar, Windsor Locks

For we men, and those wonderful women who so excel at being "one of the guys," sports bars are the best places to take in a sporting event short of actually attending. This time of year, I live and die with Maize & Blue, mostly dying in recent years. Typically, Michigan thunders off

to a...

Sizzling Season For Foodies In Hartford

At 2010's "Big Mo" party in Hartford, city officials, developers and business leaders, including former Hartford Mayor Pedro Eddie Perez, Riverfront Recapture head Joe Marfuggi and HB Nitkin's Helen Nitkin, stood together in a shell of a cavernous building with a dirt floor, envisioning...

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A La Carte

Pastrami On Wry: A Corner Eatery That Satisfies