

Opening Doors To A Brighter Future

Volume 1, Issue 1 Fall 2008

## CONNTAC, Inc. Board of Directors Holds It's 40th Annual Breakfast Meeting



### **Access to Higher Education is Half the Battle.**

The 40th Annual CONNTAC Breakfast Meeting was held. Individuals from the community colleges, local organizations and high schools were in attendance. The purpose of the event is to honor and encourage outstanding participants who have overcome obstacles in order to obtain higher education. congratulations to the scholarship recipients.

#### **Inside This Issue:**

**A Message from the Director • CONNTAC 40th Annual Breakfast Meeting  
Maximizing Your Scholarship Search • The Do's and Don'ts of STUDYING  
CONNTAC-EOC Lands Client in Prison**

#### **A message to Dr. Norman from the president of CONNTAC, Kenneth Armstrong**

*Dr. Norman,*

*I wish to congratulate you for being the recipient of the 2007 Friend of CONNTAC Award during its 40th Breakfast Program Celebration. You have served as an educator and mentor for over 30 years. You have inspired so many to follow in your footsteps and work toward equal access to educational opportunity for all. We at CONNTAC know how well deserved this award was.*

*As you know, CONNTAC has 10 educational opportunity centers located throughout the CT Community Colleges and provide college placement services to over 3,500 students annually. In addition, at the Breakfast Program CONNTAC Inc. gave out 12 one thousand dollar scholarships to its students.*

*Sharing the Friend of CONNTAC Award is our humble way of saying thanks for the partnerships that we have worked hard to establish over the years.*

*You are among many distinguished recipients of the award, to name a few;*

*Mr. Andrew McKirdy  
Dr. Peter Rosa  
Mr. Marc Herzog  
Dr. Eileen Baccus  
Dr. Jai Smith*

*On behalf of the CONNTAC Board, I wish to thank you for your many years of service and support.*

*Sincerely,*

*Kenneth Armstrong  
President, CONNTAC Inc.*

## Maximizing Your Scholarship Search

By: Erica Coleman, Educational Counselor



**Erica Coleman**  
Educational Counselor  
Conntac, Inc.

It's no secret that the cost of a college education is enormously expensive. With this in mind, it is important to apply for plenty of scholarships. Scholarships, like grants, are a form of financial aid that does not have to be repaid. However, one does not qualify for a scholarship by filling out the FAFSA. Students must apply for scholarships individually, and they may apply

for as many as necessary. Contrary to popular belief, scholarship eligibility isn't limited to students with high academic averages or those who can demonstrate financial need. Students of all background and levels of ability, new or returning, undergraduate or graduate, can find sources for scholarships.

The only tools needed for your scholarship search are a pen, 10 copies of sample "Request for Scholarship Application Letters," stamped envelopes, and dedication. Try to begin your scholarship search early. The earlier the better! Also, give priority to state, regional, and local scholarships. Most students will have more success with scholarships targeted to a smaller group. Many regional foundations offer a common application so students can apply for several scholarships using one application. Check the guidance office or career center to review listings. In addition, ask parents and

relatives about scholarship opportunities through their employer, church, and/ or civic organizations. It is also a good idea to check the college web-sites for potential grants and scholarships when researching schools of choice. Retrieve the scholarship applications from the college's admissions or financial aid office. In addition remember to inquire at libraries, religious affiliations, community organizations, local agencies, and businesses for more scholarship leads. Last but not least, look toward reputable internet financial aid resources for scholarships. Useful sites include:

[www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

[www.scholarships.com](http://www.scholarships.com)

[www.ctmentor.org](http://www.ctmentor.org)

## The Do's and Don'ts of STUDYING



College is a time of many transitions, both social and intellectual. One of the keys to academic success in college is learning to balance your time. Schedule time for studying what you have learned in class and in reading your homework assignments.

1. Attend every class.

2. Take notes or bring a recorder.

3. Be on time. Many faculty members make announcements at the beginning of class.

4. Set-up a daily schedule. The problem of when to study is critical.

5. Get into a study group to find out what other students think about the subject matter.

6. Make use of study resources on campus.

7. Know thyself. You know when the best time is for you to study. Whether it is morning or evening.

8. Students who sit in the front of the class generally do better.

9. Exchange your phone number or email address with students from each of your classes. Therefore, if it is necessary to miss a class, you can get the notes and assignment from your fellow student.

10. If someone needs help,

help them. You learn a lot about the material by trying to explain it to someone else.

11. If you are feeling tired or burnt out, you might seek out a professor or counselor and talk to them about it. It is normal to feel stressed in the middle of the semester.

12. All professors have office hours, find out when his or her office hours are and see them.

13. Read aggressively. Most studies suggest that you first read the summary paragraph at the end of the chapter. This is what the author thinks is important. Then, read the questions at the end of the chapter. As you read the chapter, you should be able to recognize the answers to the questions.

14. Have a goal.

## CONNTAC-EOC Lands Client in Prison

By: *Pat Stamidis*



Connecticut Talent Assistance Cooperative-Educational Opportunity Center (CONNTAC-EOC) has been a part of my life since April 1988. I returned to this country with my two small children, ages 3 1/2 and 5. We arrived with only the clothes on our backs and three suitcases. I had no job prospects or a place to live. I did, however, have a high school diploma and plenty experience as a waitress. At the time, it was far better to be in the United States with family and friends who cared about us than to stay

in a very volatile situation. I asked myself, "How am I going to support these children and give them a better life than what I had?" I made a few phone calls and was put in touch with an educational counselor from CONNTAC-EOC who worked out of Mattatuck Community College; now known as Naugatuck Valley Community College.

The counselor was able to help me with all the paperwork of registering for the class, filling out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form, and giving me Pell Grant information. In May 1988, I took my first college course in many years. It was a four-credit Biology class. I did not think I would be able to get a good grade having been told all my life that I was "stupid" (first by my father and then by my husband). Today, I realize the detrimental effect these two people had on my life. Not only did I earn an "A" in the class, but I went on to become a peer tutor through the college's

Work Study Program. While at Mattatuck, I received a couple of scholarships due to my hard work and high grade point average. In May 1989 I graduated summa cum laude with an Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts. I was the first person in my family to earn a college degree. What an exhilarating feeling!

My CONNTAC counselor helped me make the transition from Mattatuck to Central Connecticut State University. Naturally, there was more paperwork. He helped me with registering for courses, filling out the FAFSA form and provided me with more Pell Grant and scholarship information. I took five courses each semester and two to three courses in the summertime. I would also take a course during the winter inter-sessions. In December 1991 I completed my Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and graduated magna cum laude. Wow! Another achievement in my life that I never believed would hap-

## CONNTAC-EOC Lands Client in Prison

*(Continued from page 4)*

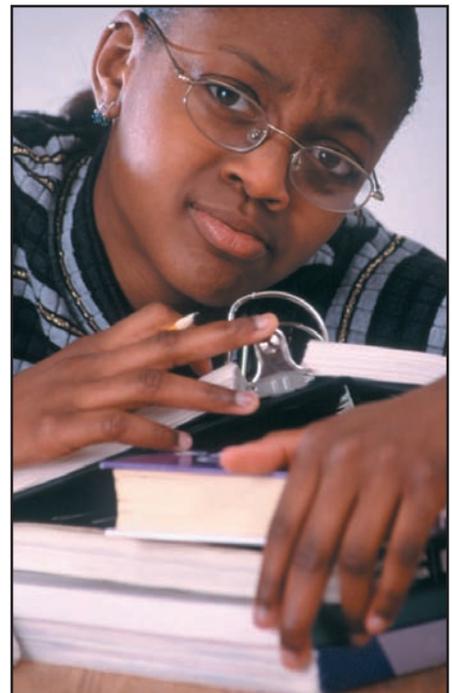
pen to me. I realized during these years that I was also doing something that would help my children—I was a positive role model for them. They saw me studying. They saw me budgeting my time so that we could spend quality time together (even though there was not a lot of it). They saw me going to all their school and extra-curricular functions. They were witnesses to what is called delayed gratification. I had to put them and my education ahead of me. I had to put time for myself on hold. I knew in my heart that it would pay off. And, it did.

In February 1992, I received a phone call from my Mattatuck CC counselor who asked if I had gotten a teaching position. I had not. I reminded him that it was February and not too many schools were looking for teachers then. He told me he heard of a part-time teaching position with the State of Connecticut. I asked, "A teaching position with the State? I can-

not work part-time, I need a full-time position." He said, "Okay, but it has full benefits." In my head I could hear the sound of just a winning jackpot at a slot machine. Oh, my goodness. I needed to have the benefits for my children. I asked, "Where?" He said, "A prison." I asked, "Are you kidding me? You have got to be kidding!" I did not know they had school in prison. I never heard of it. I interviewed for the position and got it. This was one of the best things that ever happened to me.

I went on to get my Master's Degree and Sixth-Year Certificate and am now a Principal at a men's prison in Enfield, CT. And wouldn't you know, I am still utilizing CONNTAC-EOC services. Every other week, Educational Counselor Claire Gagner comes to the prison to help the inmates with their transition back to society by getting them the assistance they need to further their education. I am ever so grateful to CONNTAC-EOC

for helping others and me to fulfill dreams that may not have been possible.



### Students Need Your Support!

Please send a donation to Conntac, Inc. Go to [http://www.conntacinc.org/gift\\_pledge\\_form.pdf](http://www.conntacinc.org/gift_pledge_form.pdf) to download form.

## Highlights of CONNTAC's 40th Annual Meeting Event

By: *Cecilia F. Nugent*

During the Annual Meeting held October 26, 2007 at the Rocky Hill Marriott Hotel the Board of Directors recognized 12 students who have overcome tremendous obstacles in order to pursue their education. The crowd of approximately 150 colleagues and friends watched on as the follow-

ing students were awarded \$1000 scholarships to assist in their educational endeavors: Sania Beckford, Bridgeport; Darline Bonilla, Willimantic; Janay Coplon, Stamford; Sara Doerner, Wallingford; Jasmine Lancaster, Mystic; Shawn Lukaszewicz, Norwich; Ashley McNeil, Waterbury; Crystal

Perez, Bridgeport; Dorothy Rowland, Bloomfield; Wendy Tordonato, New Britain; Stalin Vera, Wallingford; and Tanesha Wilkinson, Plainville. During the event each recipient provided heartfelt testimony of their struggles and how the CONNTAC-Educational Opportunity Center program has helped them in



## Highlights of CONNTAC's 40th Annual Meeting Event

*(Continued from page 6)*

their education. Through the "love and caring" assistance of one of the EOC counselors, Ashley McNeil shared how this counselor's "vision of who I can become" and the support of the funds "will surely change my life".

Guest speaker Dr. Paul A. Susen, Chief Academic and Student Affairs Officer with the CT Community Colleges, encouraged the recipients and audience to view education in 3 ways: reflection, change and making good decisions. Tomorrow "may not be, but I have today", he said. And with today if we see a problem or a change that needs to be made then it's "all about what we want to be and how we are going to get there." The only way we're going to achieve our goals is to ask intelligent questions. It is "through education that we learn to ask intelligent questions", Dr. Susen shared during his address to the recipients and audience.

Dr. John C. Norman who was honored as this year's

Friend of CONNTAC award-ee shared with the audience his commitment to educational access being one of the original Directors of what is now the University of Connecticut's Center for Academic Programs (CAP). Now the Dean of Continuing Education at Northwestern CT Community College, Norman stated the "fact that I tried to help somebody" has made all the difference in his life and career. He stressed that "our work is not done" when it comes to assisting low income first generation students who have demonstrated barriers to receiving an education. Programs like CONNTAC "care about where you're going". Through the quality of people, an expectation of high academic achievement, and personal and parental involvement [we] "want to teach you to fish for life", he shared.

As a final wrap to the momentous event President Kenneth Armstrong reminded the attendees it is because of the belief in

our students that drives CONNTAC's commitment. The services and support provided "is more about you than us." In closing he challenged the audience to "meet here again in another 40 years."



**Cecilia Nugent**  
*Executive Program Director  
Conntac, Inc.*

## NEOCA Goes To Washington

Photos from our 2008 trip to Washington, DC to attend the Annual Conference of the National Educational Opportunity Centers Association (NEOCA). Visit us online to view more images at <http://www.conntacinc.org/highlights.htm>.

