



## With the Theme of “Now More Than Ever,” CONNTAC Celebrates its 50th Anniversary

By *Grantley S. Adams*

On Friday, October 20, 2017, CONNTAC, Inc. held its 50th Annual Breakfast Meeting under the banner of this year’s theme, “Now More Than Ever”, which President of the Board, Kenneth G. Armstrong said, “Speaks directly to the steps CONNTAC continues to take in order to increase awareness and assistance to place adults into various colleges, uni-

versities, and career and technical training programs. It is important that we prepare citizens to gain the skills and education necessary to meet the needs of today’s workforce.”

The Guest Speaker for this auspicious occasion was Mark E. Ojakian, President of the Connecticut State Colleges and University

System, who shared a poignant and personal message that resonated with the entire audience but particularly with the Scholarship Award recipients whose touching stories of overcoming challenges and adversity were mirrored in President Ojakian’s presentation. Ten current or former CONNTAC students were awarded scholarships and their challenges and accomplishments were highlighted in a very moving presentation ceremony.

The Friend of CONNTAC Award was given to Kim W. Holley, Former Superintendent of Schools, the CT Department of Corrections.



*Photo from Left to Right: Cecilia Nugent, Mark E. Ojakian and Kenneth G. Armstrong*

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## With the Theme of “Now More Than Ever,” CONNTAC Celebrates its 50th Anniversary

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CONNTAC’s Executive Director, Cecilia F. Nugent, presented an overview of the organization’s performance in the past year, and Board President Ken Armstrong recognized Dr. James L. Williams and Cecilia Nugent as this year’s recipients of the President’s Award. Dr. Williams is the former CONNTAC Board President and has served on the Board for over 40 years. Cecilia Nugent has served as Executive Director and Assistant Director for over 25 years.

In her closing remarks, Dian Brown-Albert, Chair of this year’s Annual Meeting, thanked all of the participants and the overflow audience for its continual support and for making the 50th Annual Meeting a very memorable occasion.



*Photo from Left to Right: Cecilia Nugent, Friend of CONNTAC Kim W. Holley and Kenneth G. Armstrong*



*Mark E. Ojakian at the podium*



*Photo from Left to Right: President’s Award Recipient Dr. James L. Williams, Cecilia Nugent and Kenneth G. Armstrong*

## Federal Student Aid ID

By Allyce Pace

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) hosted a college fair at the Convention Center in Hartford, CT, late March 2018. Since 1937, NACAC has been dedicated to helping students come in contact with professionals worldwide who can help them in pursuit of post-secondary education. The NACAC fair is held every year and is a chance for high school sophomores, juniors, seniors and their parents in the Greater Hartford region to meet with and gather information on potential colleges that their child might be interested in attending. At the NACAC fair not only are there many colleges in attendance, there are also workshops and counseling sessions from financial aid professionals

One of the workshops given at the NACAC fair is a Financial Aid Workshop. The Financial Aid Workshop is presented by a representative of CONNTAC-EOC and is an overview of the financial aid process and how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Filling out the financial aid application can be frustrating for many, and before a student can begin filling out the FAFSA, they must first obtain a Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID).

Many students, 24 years of age and under, do not realize that not only do they have to create an FSA ID, so does one of their parents. When creating an FSA



ID, you will create a username, password, and security questions. The FSA ID is the most common way to sign the FAFSA application electronically, gain access to their FAFSA application, to make any corrections and/or to renew their FAFSA. Parents not only use their FSA ID for their electronic signature, it is also used to retrieve and transfer their financial information from the IRS website onto the FAFSA application. When filling out the FSA ID application you will be providing important identifiers such as your name, social security number, and date of birth. Make sure that this information is entered in correctly, the Department of Education does cross reference the information with the Social Security Administration. If any of these personal identifiers are incorrect, there will be an email sent

letting the student and/or parent know that the Social Security Administration was unable to verify. If the parent has more than one child attending college, the FSA ID that was created will be used for all of their children.

The challenge comes with having both the student and the parent remembering their username and password. Many students try to create a FSA ID for their parents and we strongly suggest that they not do that. We encourage students and parents to write down their FSA ID information and store it in a place that they will be able to easily access each year. The FAFSA application process opens October 1, 2018, no need to wait to create your FSA ID. Create it early and be one step ahead! ([www.fsaid.ed.gov](http://www.fsaid.ed.gov)).

## Career Workshops for Inmates

By *Philhemina Boone*

My name is Philhemina Boone, and I'm an Educational Counselor at Site 10 in the Danielson-Willimantic area.

My experience as an educational counselor has been truly eye-opening. I have worked with a number of populations, including visiting the Brooklyn Corrections Center to conduct monthly workshops for inmates. This experience has shown me how grateful they are for people and resources that help them accomplish their goals as they begin a new phase of their life upon being granted parole.

From the very beginning, the inmates were highly engaged and participated actively. Their dreams came to the surface during the first career workshop, "Ten Steps to Starting Your Own Business." The positive responses throughout—their hopeful faces, their notes, and their follow-up questions—guided me as I developed more original materials for the next sessions, "Ten Ways to Fund a Start-Up" and "Ten Ways to Modify Your Business Plan." They are starting to believe that they can overcome the stigma of being an ex-offender and rise to the challenges of starting over. The series, which is new to Brooklyn Correctional Center and will provide resources for many inmates in future years as well, has given me a deeper perspective on the necessity and urgency of reach-

ing the incarcerated population. I have grown as a public speaker, a curriculum developer, and a person. I'm looking forward to gaining further experience and

helping open the doors to higher education and life-long success for as many clients as I can.



## College Goal Sunday

By Kara Ramsey

As a new educational counselor for CONNTAC, Inc. I was eager and excited to jump at the chance to assist families at College Goal Sunday. College Goal Sunday is an event hosted annually that offers students who are college bound with vital assistance in completing the FASFA application (Free Application for Student Federal Aid). As this process can be stressful and time consuming, many families came out with open arms to receive hands-on assistance with this process, especially considering this was the first time many had even seen the application. Financial Aid experts, community partners, and volunteers all came together to assist students and their families

with not only the FASFA application, but also with understanding the ins and outs of the college selection process, loans, scholarships, types of institutions, and the cost of attendance. For many families this is a place where they can get the necessary information and resources to help make their entrance into college as seamless as possible.

Because the information given to many families is not easily understood since much of the formulas and data are new and foreign to them, College Goal Sunday remains a necessary and vital event for students. This year College Goal Sunday events were hosted throughout Connecticut

and CONNTAC Inc.'s Educational Counselors encouraged their attendance to make sure all families who needed the assistance could receive it.

For me, this event showcased the importance of my daily work and the true need to help spread awareness to families throughout Connecticut. I look forward to continuing my efforts as a volunteer with College Goal Sunday in the future.

"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." – Malcom X.



## 2016-2017 Scholarship Recipients



**Gladis Anayaz**

*Attending University of Saint Joseph- CT*

*Field of Interest: Social Work*

*CONNTAC Representative: Jay Holley*

Gladis transferred from Capital Community College, and is currently in her first semester at the University of Saint Joseph. Aside from being recently divorced, adjusting to new living arrangements, and being a single mother to her son, Gladis suffered a severe ankle injury at work in 2015. This unforeseen event unchained countless medical and financial hardships in her life. She underwent unsuccessful treatments, two surgeries, and she is not allowed to return to work due to the injuries.

Gladis took a leave of absence without pay. She does not receive child support, her unemployment benefits have stopped, and her SNAP benefits were reduced. Gladis explains that these challenges make it financially difficult to cover the expenses associated with attending a university. She expresses gratitude for her CONNTAC Counselor, Jay Holley, for suggesting other options to get aid to pay for college expenses. "Because of his assistance, I am now on a path to accomplish my dream of attending a four-year college." Gladis shares that the scholarship will help to purchase books and a computer.



**Usman Azeem**

*Attending University of Connecticut- Stamford Campus- CT*

*Field of Interest: Biology*

*CONNTAC Representative: DeShayla Shelley*

Usman is a Biology major at the University of Connecticut with ultimate dreams of becoming a cardiologist. At an early age, he sadly lost both of his parents. He explains that it affected him mentally, and he could not deal with anything. Usman decided not to give up, and he moved to the United States with his older sister. He thanks his CONNTAC Counselor, DeShayla Shelley, for giving very helpful answers to his questions along with many tips about college. Usman explains that the scholarship will help him continue his education and fulfill all of his goals.

## 2016-2017 Scholarship Recipients



### Joseph Glennon

*Attending University of Connecticut- Avery Point Campus- CT*

*Field of Interest: Education*

*CONNTAC Representative: Gloria Dover*

Joseph received his Associate's degree from Three Rivers Community College and is now in his first semester at the University of Connecticut. Prior to pursuing his college education, Joseph encountered numerous challenges, including, unemployment, alcoholism, and homelessness. Today, he serves on the Board of Directors for the WARM Center, where he once stayed when he was homeless. He also tutors adults at the Literacy Volunteers of Washington County, and he performs in a monthly musical event as an accompanist and performer

to benefit the food pantry at Christ Episcopal Church in Norwich, CT. He credits his CONNTAC Counselor, Gloria Dover, for providing him with the information needed to see the opportunities that were available to him at Three Rivers Community College and beyond. "Gloria is always pleasant, kind, and courteous to all those she interacts with." Joseph explains that the scholarship will help with fees associated with college tuition, medical costs, books, and transportation.



### Alan Gregory

*Attending Gateway Community College- CT*

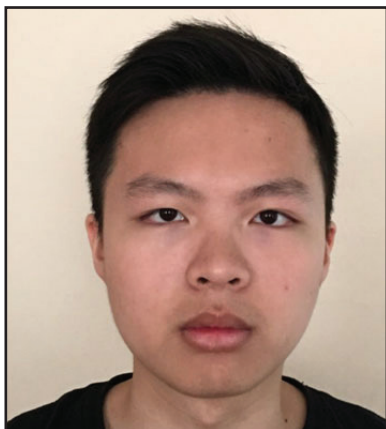
*Field of Interest: English*

*CONNTAC Representative: DeShayla Shelley*

Alan is an English major who is interested in becoming a writer of fiction and a copywriter. He has encountered challenges in pursuit of achieving his dreams. He explains that he suffered from depression throughout his high school years that continued after graduation. He began self-medicating with prescription opiates, which evolved into an intravenous heroin addiction. Homelessness inevitably followed, and he found himself in a "self-destructive loop that was impossible to get out of." Alan

later joined the army to get away from drugs. However, while he was deployed at boot camp, the doctors discovered that he had contracted Hepatitis C. As a result, he was home. Within weeks of getting back, he was homeless and self-medicating again. He shares that it took 6 months in jail, years of therapy for bi-polar disorder and addiction, and an unshakable support system to get his life on the right path. By Fall 2016, with 4 years clean, he re-enrolled in school at Gateway Community College. He thanks his CONNTAC Counselor, DeShayla Shelley, for giving him the confidence to apply for the scholarship. He explains that the scholarship will assist him with room and board.

## 2016-2017 Scholarship Recipients



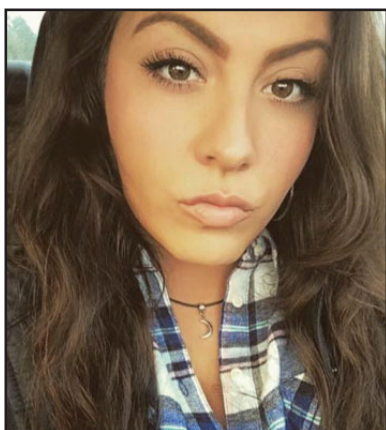
**Lap Hei Lam**

*Attending Princeton University- NJ*

*Field of Interest: Chemical Engineering*

*CONNTAC Representative: Margarita (Daisy) Aiken*

Lap is a Chemical Engineering major at Princeton University who has a vision to help make the world more sustainable by improving batteries, finding new energy sources, and making clean water more economically feasible by coming up with new ways of purifying tainted water. He explains that he would never have thought that he would be able to study at such a prestigious institution because of his family's situation. Lap's family migrated from Hong Kong and runs a small Chinese restaurant where he would help out up to 40 hours each week. Working so many hours made schoolwork hard to complete. He often wanted to quit and simply pursue the restaurant life. However, he realized that would defeat the whole purpose of his family moving to the United States in pursuit of a better life. He appreciates his CONNTAC Counselor, Daisy Aiken, for giving him fee waivers, helping him complete the FAFSA, and educating him about the types of loans and other financial aid options. Lap explains that the scholarship will reduce the amount of time that he has to work, so that he will have more time to focus on his studies.



**Rachel Marino**

*Attending Wesleyan University- CT*

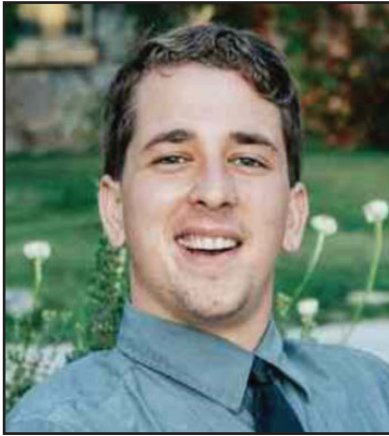
*Field of Interest: Astronomy and Math*

*CONNTAC Representative: Margarita (Daisy) Aiken*

Rachel is a recent graduate of Middlesex Community College (MxCC), and is currently in her first semester at Wesleyan University. She is a single mother of two children, and says that her journey to bettering herself began eight years ago when her son was born. When she started MxCC, she took the Accuplacer test and had to take two non-credit math classes prior to Algebra due to her scores. With hard work and determination, she climbed her way up from Pre-Algebra through the highest level of math at MxCC. She commendably earned A's in Pre-Calculus, Calculus 1, Calculus 2, and Differential Equations. Additionally, Rachel put her love of helping others to use as a math tutor, a volunteer at the Green Street Arts Center, and serving as the President of the MxCC Math Club this past semester. She expresses extreme gratitude for her CONNTAC Counselor, Daisy Aiken, for her helping her with her college transfer journey. "Daisy issued fee waivers to me for a variety of universities, and she pointed me in the right direction with resources and online tools for scholarships." Rachel shares that the scholarship will help with travel and childcare expenses.



## 2016-2017 Scholarship Recipients



### **Coty Noller**

*Attending Western Colorado State University- CO*

*Field of Interest: Business Administration*

*CONNTAC Representative: Michelle Jones*

Coty is a recent graduate of Lincoln Culinary Institute, and he currently attends Western Colorado State University with dreams of opening his own restaurant franchise. Sadly, he explains that he had “no normal childhood” because it was filled with horror, abuse, and nothing but sadness. As a result of child abuse up to the age of 11, Coty was placed in state custody for the remainder of his years as a minor. Within that seven year span of time, he was moved around 26 times among foster families, group homes, and residential programs. Although his past

was traumatizing, he is optimistic in saying that it was the best thing that ever happened to him. He further explains, “I learned to embrace my pain because it made me wiser and stronger.” Coty shares that things started to change in his life with the newfound freedom of turning 18. Throughout these years of freedom, he went to culinary school, he did an internship at Walt Disney World, and he worked for the state at UCONN, as a chef’s assistant. He thanks his CONNTAC Counselor, Michelle Jones, for being very kind and patient. Coty shares that the scholarship will assist him to gain capital to open a franchise.



### **Khushbu Patel**

*Attending Southern Connecticut State University- CT*

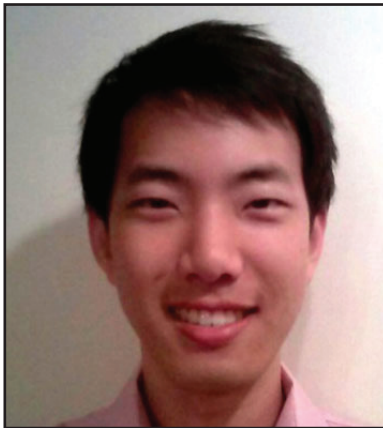
*Field of Interest: Biology*

*CONNTAC Representative: Margarita (Daisy) Aiken*

Khushbu is a Biology major at Southern Connecticut State University with dreams of becoming a Pediatrician. She moved to the United States with her family in 2013 and quickly learned to speak English. However, with her parents still understanding very little English, Khushbu took on adult responsibilities by helping to manage bills and review paperwork requiring a response in English. She was named “Varsity Scholar” of her high school graduating class of 2017. She also engaged in community involvement through tutoring and volunteering at Wall-

ingford Public Schools and Child Daycare Development Center. She thanks her CONNTAC Counselor, Daisy Aiken, for guiding her through completing the FAFSA, to receive financial aid. She explains that the scholarship will make her educational and career goals less challenging to obtain.

## 2016-2017 Scholarship Recipients



### Jiwoo Song

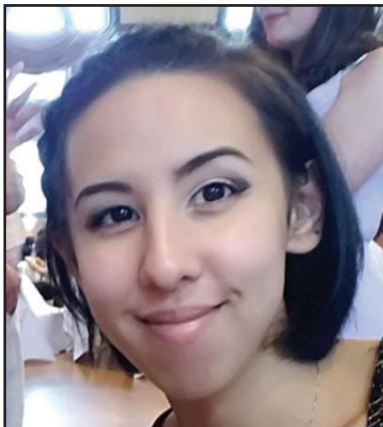
*Attending Duke University- NC*

*Field of Interest: Materials Engineering*

*CONNTAC Representative: Laura Blackwell*

Jiwoo transferred from Norwalk Community College, and he is now in his first semester at Duke University pursuing a degree in Materials Engineering. He moved to America when he was six years old from South Korea. He couldn't speak English, and he says that he immediately felt like an outsider. "Growing up, I was constantly forced to recognize that I was different from everyone else, when I simply wanted to blend in as a kid." After high school, Jiwoo explains that his family could not afford to pay for college, so he spent several years working odd jobs at

Wendy's, FedEx, and a local farm. Having grown up in a predominately white community, he immediately noticed the diversity once he began his studies at Norwalk Community College. He explains that he was quickly accepted by his peers, and they had a blast hosting events and including other students in the community. He excelled in his classes and became a model for incoming students. He expresses extreme gratitude for his CONNTAC Counselor, Laura Blackwell, for helping him find and apply to 14 different colleges and encouraging him to apply for this scholarship. "Navigating the application process would have been much more difficult without Mrs. Blackwell and her staff." Jiwoo shares that the scholarship will help cover the costs of living expenses to include car insurance and clothing.



### Christine Torres Sutherland

*Attending University of Connecticut- Hartford Campus- CT*

*Field of Interest: Molecular and Cell Biology*

*CONNTAC Representative: Shoshannah Henry*

Christine's goal is to graduate from the University of Connecticut with a degree in Molecular and Cell Biology, transition to medical school, and then become a Pediatric Surgeon. She describes this goal as not always seeming attainable because she was a stay-at-home mother who struggled with severe mental health, learning and medical issues. She further explains that she spends time volunteering at a local soup kitchen once every month. Christine expresses gratitude for her CONNTAC Counselor, Shoshannah Henry, for being very helpful and encouraging.

"Shoshannah empowers everyone that she meets and always makes herself available." Christine shares that the scholarship will help out tremendously with paying for her college education.

## 4 New Members Appointed to CONNTAC Board 2018-2019



May 2018 Orientation - (L-r) Dr. Anna-Maria Heredia, Assistant Director of Financial Aid – Western Connecticut State University; Steven J. McDowell, Jr., Director of Financial Aid Services – Connecticut State Colleges and Universities; Kenneth G. Armstrong, President; Cecilia F. Nugent, Executive Director; Lisette Cobb, Site Coordinator/City Connects – Hartford Public Schools; Michael Amouzou, Associate Director Financial Aid – Middlesex Community College

Visit us online for information on the latest scholarship recipients and how to donate!

[conntacinc.org](http://conntacinc.org)

