

NEWS RELEASE

By Marie R. Harris

Danville Community College's Alumni Association recently *announced 2009 Outstanding Alumni* honorees, all four from the local region. Honorees include Sherman Saunders, Danville's Mayor, who is Executive Director of Pittsylvania County Community Action, Inc.; E. Wayne Conner, member of the Halifax County Board of Supervisors and retired plant manager of Presto Products Company; Dr. Harry Kolendrianos, DCC Professor of Business Management and former C-BIG area coordinator; and Martha Bond Flanagan, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company Engineering and Maintenance Department retiree.

"Honorees, chosen by the Recognition and Scholarship Committee of the Alumni Council from 76,000 alumni, have consistently served their communities and their fields of employment with distinction," said Buddy Rawley, DCC Educational Foundation director. "Their accomplishments and their lives are shining examples to our present students."

Two honorees yearly are Danville Community College alumni from the years since the college's creation in 1966. The first of the two is Sherman Saunders who studied at DCC in 1974 and 1975 and then went on to study at Averett University, Winston-Salem State and the University of Virginia.

Saunders, a native of Pittsylvania County and a Vietnam era veteran, has a long and distinguished career serving his fellow man and seeking to alleviate and lessen social and fiscal problems. Not only is he the present Mayor of the City of Danville, but for 30 years he has been the Executive Director of Pittsylvania County Community Action, Inc. "My goal has always been service to man and community, ever since I was 15 years old. I heard Dr. Martin Luther King say at High Street Baptist Church, 'We've got to work together.' I shook his hand, looked into his eyes and knew I had to try. My mission to work together has stayed with me from that time."

To carry out that mission, Saunders began employment in 1970 with Pittsylvania County Community Action. When he took over as executive director in 1979, the agency had a \$1 million budget with 45 employees serving only Pittsylvania County.

Today, the agency he oversees has 160 employees serving Pittsylvania, Henry, Patrick and Campbell counties and the cities of Martinsville and Danville. Assisting 12,000 people annually in 12 office locations, PCCA, Inc., an honoree of the Chamber of Commerce with the *Large Business of the Year Award*, has an annual economic impact of \$85.2 million regionally.

In 1996, Saunders, who thoroughly understood the need for regional cooperation among governmental bodies, was elected to Danville City Council, becoming its Vice-Mayor in 2006-2007 and its Mayor in 2008. Today, through regional cooperation, there are five major entities established and operating for regional development. Previous to his election, he served DCC as the president of its Center for Business, Industry and Government (C-BIG), the precursor of the present-day Regional Center for Applied Training and Technology (RCATT).

Service in business, government and beyond has been the hallmark of his career. He has been president of the Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia Council Against Poverty and the Mid-Atlantic Community Action Association, which includes Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C. At the state level, he has been appointed to boards and commissions by three Virginia governors: John Dalton, Charles "Chuck Robb," and Gerald Baliles.

The second honoree from DCC is E. Wayne Conner, a native of Halifax, who has been involved in college programs and campus activities for over 20 years. A former marine and retail company owner, Conner holds two degrees from DCC, an Associate in Accounting and an Associate in Banking and Finance.

Both degrees were pursued after his affiliation with Presto Products Company, an affiliation which began in 1980 after a stint as a franchise store owner of Montgomery Ward. At Presto he trained and worked in a variety of positions over the first 18 years of employment with the South Boston company. In 1984 he completed his first degree and by 1987 he had graduated a second time, both degrees attained while employed full time. In 1998 he became plant manager, a position he held until retirement in 2005.

During his years at Presto, he was not just a plant manager but also a very involved citizen. He served DCC on its Workforce Services Board and on the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center Board. He is a past Vice-president of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, a past chairman of Halifax Forward and past Chairman of the Halifax Education Foundation. An elected supervisor on the Halifax Board of Supervisors, he also serves on the United Way Board of Halifax County.

In his retirement, Conner not only represents the interest of citizens on the Board of Supervisors but also works part time at Virginia International Raceway.

The final two honorees are from the colleges that were established on campus in 1937 and 1947, Danville Technical Institute and Virginia Polytechnic Institute-Danville, the colleges that became DCC. The honoree from VPI-Danville, Dr. Harry Kolendrianos, began his college career in 1961 as a Danville native at the local branch of VPI, a branch with approximately 200 students. By July 1, 1965, he had received both his B.S. and M.S. degrees in Business Administration from Virginia Polytechnic Institute at Blacksburg, Virginia.

Kolendrianos returned to his home town where, in 1966, he began a life-long career in education and community service. Recruited by VPI-Danville's president, Joe Taylor, Kolendrianos began teaching Economics and Statistics while also serving as VPI-Danville's Business Manager.

Commenting about his recruitment as an instructor, Kolendrianos explained, "I was finishing my master's degree, had been examined for military duty and thought I was headed for Vietnam. Then I was told Joe Taylor and Kenneth Neathery wanted to talk with me on a Saturday. I came back home. We talked; I told them I was 1A and probably going to be drafted. They said, 'Will you come if we get you a deferment.' I said I'd try the classroom. Three weeks later I received a deferment, and that fall I started teaching. For three or four years, I continued to receive deferments. Did I think I would be teaching long, no, but here I am, still teaching."

While teaching Kolendrianos continued to pursue further education, receiving a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study in 1976 and his Ed.D. in Community College Education in 1977 from VPI.

As DCC, under its third president, expanded its offerings in retraining workers and serving business and industry needs, Kolendrianos became the C-BIG Coordinator, a position that was instrumental in expanding DCC's mission in the region.

An avid supporter of DCC, Kolendrianos sees the college's future as one "with measured growth and a growing reputation for quality instruction for students coming from academically challenging curriculums in high school to those who are returning for retraining. The reputation of community colleges as places where students receive the best of educational opportunities is growing—DCC now has buildings it needed, so we have a bright future—I'll still be here often."

He retires in August 2009 as Professor of Business Management with over 40 years of not only college focus in numerous areas but also community focus.

In the community, Kolendrianos has served the YWCA, the United Fund, the Danville Chamber of Commerce, Hughes Home, Danville Regional Medical, DCC Educational Foundation and Danville Public Schools in various capacities, particularly in fundraising and long-range planning. He currently serves on the Area Manpower Planning Board of the Virginia Cooperative Area Manpower Planning System, the Manpower Development Committee of the Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Directors for Virginia Bank and Trust Company.

In 1991 he received the *Governor's Award for Volunteering Excellence*, a testament to his lengthy affiliations with local organizations and their needs, and is a past recipient of the *Award of Excellence in Education* from the Danville Chamber of Commerce.

The honoree from Danville Technical Institute, Martha Bond Flanagan, came to Danville in 1958 from Dugspur, Virginia, to pursue her dream of becoming a secretary. That dream was to become the nucleus of an involved business and community-oriented career.

Martha explained, "I enjoyed my DTI year and was prepared to face the employment world once I graduated. I will never forget learning to type on an electric typewriter. DTI only had one, and I always asked to use it. Before going to work at Goodyear, I worked in a Virginia County Extension Office as secretary. I had to go to Virginia Tech to take a shorthand and typing test. When I asked to take the test with an electric typewriter, they said no one ever asked for an electric typewriter. I took the test and was hired immediately."

After her time in extension work, Flanagan was hired by Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company where she worked for 27 years; 24 of those years she was Secretary to the Manager of Engineering in the Engineering and Maintenance Departments.

While at Goodyear, she served on the Board of Directors of the Goodyear Family Credit Union holding offices of president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer in various years. After retirement, she continued volunteer work with the credit union, serving two years as the secretary/treasurer of the URW Federal Credit Union Retirees Club.

In 1987 Martha received the *Goodyear Spirit Award* from the company and in 1988 she was the *Dan-Pitts Chapter Woman of the Year* for her many years of dedication to the community through the Dan-Pitts Chapter American Business Women Association.

After retirement, Martha and her husband served Virginia as the state AARP Community Coordinators while also volunteering with God's Pit Crew, Little Life and the local AARP chapter. As part of her service to Danville Community College and alumni, Martha presently chairs a committee of the 1959 Business graduates for their Fifty Year Class Reunion to be held August 8, 2009.

Dr. Carlyle Ramsey, DCC president, said, "Alumni awards at DCC are an ongoing recognition of individuals whose lives demonstrate exemplary contributions to their communities, chosen careers, and often Danville Community College. We are justly proud of the four recipients for 2009, who are examples to all of us concerning the value of dedication and leadership."