

Danville Community College's Alumni Association honored four individuals as the *2013 Outstanding DCC Alumni* in 6 p.m. banquet ceremonies April 19 in Oliver Hall on the DCC campus. Honorees represent Danville Community College and its two predecessor institutions, Danville Technical Institute and Virginia Polytechnic Institute—Danville Extension.

Outstanding Alumni selections include **Anita Wyatt**, Danville Technical Institute graduate, 1957, as well as DCC graduate for years 1973, 1975, 1978, 1983, who retired after 20 years employment with Danville Community College, afterwards becoming a community volunteer. The second honoree is **G. Rodney Reynolds**, VPI—Danville Extension graduate, 1967, the Director of Finance for Roman Eagle Memorial Home and retired Senior Vice-president and Chief Financial Officer for Dan River Inc.

Other honorees include **Dr. Lesia M. Banks**, Danville Community College graduate, 1985, who is employed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as well as is the Founder of *Dr. Lesia M. Banks Enterprises*, specializing in career coaching and organizational leadership consulting and **Stephen Worley**, Danville Community College graduate, 1970, President and Chief Executive Officer of Louisiana Children's Medical Center in New Orleans, Louisiana.

**For the first honoree, Anita Wyatt**, education beyond high school was a “not too practical desire” since family finances were prohibitive when she graduated from George Washington High School. Because of this situation, she began work after high school graduation at C&P Telephone Company, diligently saving money for education. A co-worker encouraged her to find a way to attend Danville Technical Institute for a year—that opportunity opened up with a part-time job for the Danville School Board which directed all expenditures and activities for DTI. The job was on campus on the second floor of the two-story cafeteria building located near the present Foundation Hall.

“When I entered Danville Technical Institute as a one-year secretarial student, I had no idea that I would ever be able to obtain the education I have now,” explained Wyatt, who eventually attained a four-year degree as well as a Master of Business Administration.

After completing the DTI program, where she not only upgraded secretarial skills but improved composition skills, which prepared her for college courses, Wyatt worked in the office at DTI. She was a skilled employee, working at a desk, at a switchboard, with instructors' needs. In 1961, she left DTI to work for Danville's Parks and Recreation handling everything from summer programs to Parks and Recreation rentals.

In 1966 she returned to the campus as an employee in the DCC Business Office as John Zechman's secretary. She learned, after several years, that Danville Community College was offering night courses to lure working students to

campus. That venture into new territory for DCC allowed Wyatt, in 1969, to further her dream of a college degree while continuing employment. “I was unsure that I could pass college classes, so I took only two to see how difficult college-level instruction would be. “I made two A’s which assured me that I could continue, and that’s what I did. I truly enjoyed going to college, especially at DCC where if I needed help, I could get help from instructors.”

In a span of ten years, she attained four business and technology degrees at DCC, graduated from Averett University in 1977 in Business Administration and finished her MBA at Averett in 1988. With all the intense study at colleges, Wyatt still says that attaining the degrees with high honors meant a great deal to her, but “Obtaining my Certified Professional Secretary (CPS) after a rigorous exam was an accomplishment that gave me confidence in myself that I didn't have previously.

“Harold Henry at DCC told me to go take this secretarial test even though it meant hours of study ahead of time. He emphasized that it would empower me and make me even more skilled and hireable. When I obtained this national certification, I was in a small group nationwide, since the certification was something that not too many people had accomplished.”

To assure that others will have funding for education, Wyatt has established two endowed scholarships at Danville Community College. She also has purchased four bricks at the Student Center and contributed to the *Alumni Scholarship Fund*. Beyond this educational focus, she has been involved with the Danville Chapter American Business Women’s Association since 1989, serving two terms as president. In 1999 the chapter honored her as *Woman of the Year*.

Not only was business a burning interest but also music, which has filled her days since childhood. Wyatt owns four musical instruments, practicing piano or organ almost daily. “My music has definitely been a major part of my life. I have been involved in piano since I was seven years old,” explained Wyatt who recently considered returning to college to further train in piano but instead decided to use the money to help a family member attend college. A member of the choir at College Park Baptist Church, Wyatt has served the church extensively in various offices while often filling in with musical needs.

Involved throughout the community, Wyatt is a member of the Danville Historical Society, the Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History and the DCC Alumni Council.

**The second honoree, Rodney Reynolds** entered business as a career after finishing his Business Administration degree in 1969 at Virginia Tech. Since 2009 he has been setting and implementing financial policy at Roman Eagle Memorial Home.

Early in his career, he became affiliated with Dan River Inc. where he held various accounting and financial positions. In 1990 he became Vice-president for Finance and Controller for the Apparel Fabrics division. In 2004 he assumed the position of Vice-president, Controller for Operations and in 2006 became Senior Vice-president and Chief Financial Officer, with all of these positions involving setting and implementing financial policy across the international company.

“I have been very fortunate to work with very bright people who were great mentors, giving exceptional advice to aid in my growth. One vice-president told me ‘At the beginning you will agonize over a decision; after a while, you make the best decision time permitting, at times perhaps not the best decision, but you make it and move on.’”

One of the positive decisions was to accept the opportunity to study at the Colgate-Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia for six intense weeks where Reynolds was immersed in working with individuals from across the globe. “Colgate-Darden used the casework methodology where you worked in teams to analyze various business scenarios and, in response to a series of questions, present the results of your analysis. It was a period of intense study with company representatives from all over the world. We interacted on a daily basis; the global world view changed the way I think,” Reynolds explained.

Reynolds’s business acumen began on a tobacco farm in Pittsylvania County, Virginia. “Early on I saw the changes occurring in the farm economy which were making it increasingly difficult to make a living for a person just starting out. But, I was always fascinated by the business aspects of farming, so it was natural that I desired very early to work in business. The importance of seeking higher education to accomplish that desire became obvious,” Reynolds explained.

“I, along with many, many others locally was fortunate that VPI’s Extension was in Danville. I could commute 30 minutes, which was affordable—I could study under very good instructors who really cared about us, the students—that division truly impacted a large number of lives,” Reynolds explained. “It was at VPI-Danville that professors helped local students take the huge transitional step from the county school system into the college classroom; they helped us succeed dramatically well,” he added as he recounted the first writing assignment in a college classroom.

“I had English under Mr. Linkus—he was passionate about composition. I turned in that first essay—I didn’t know there was that much red ink in Virginia—I got a D—I had never had a D in my life—it was earth shaking. But I eventually earned a B in the class.

“I had history under Mr. Stahl. He gave more notes in 45 minutes than any man I’ve ever met, and all the tests came from the notes. I would have 60 pages of notes for a test. That’s why no one can read my writing today.

“And Kenneth Neathery taught accounting; he really prepared us. It’s my understanding that professors on the main campus of Virginia Tech always talked about how exceptionally well prepared the Danville students were.”

Reynolds notes that his faith has always been extremely important to him. Although early in his career he was active in the Jaycees, he could not give exceptional time to outside activities beyond his church until his children were older. But beginning in the mid 1980s, he became involved with the local United Way and has remained involved, serving as both the vice-president and the treasurer. “It is in the United Way that I often meet impressive individuals who give tirelessly, seemingly endless hours helping individuals who are less fortunate—it is truly inspiring, and so I have remained involved,” he explained.

Beyond the United Way, Reynolds has served on the Board of Directors for the Salvation Army, the Dan River Foundation where he also has served as President, on the Board of Directors for Hughes Memorial Home, and in 2012 became a member of the DCC Educational Foundation Board.

At North Main Baptist Church, he serves as a deacon, Sunday School teacher, and is actively involved with numerous committees.

**The third honoree Dr. Lesia M. Banks** wears two hats in her professional life, one as an auditor for the United States Department of Homeland Security and the second as founder of a career coaching and organizational leadership consulting business, *Dr. Lesia M. Banks Enterprises*.

Dr. Banks currently serves as the Internal Review Officer for the Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). She is the sole auditor for FEMA’s Mission Support Bureau.

Prior to joining the Department of Homeland Security, Dr. Banks served as Chief of the Statutory Compliance and Research Division in the Office of Information Programs and Services at the United States Department of State. She was responsible for a portfolio that included worldwide programs and a multi-million dollar budget.

Before joining the US State Department in April 2007, Dr. Banks served as Director, Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act Staff at the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Previous to that position, she served as Departmental Privacy Officer for the USDA where she was responsible for addressing Departmental privacy issues, including privacy policy analysis and privacy program development and implementation.

In 2004, Dr. Banks was detailed to the Executive Office of the President of the United States where she worked on developing privacy policy.

Her government career began in 1990 at the Department of Commerce where she eventually served as FOIA Officer to the late Secretary Ronald H. Brown.

Dr. Banks has served as facilitator and instructor for the American Society of Access Professionals and the Department of Justice, Legal Education Institute. In 2007, Dr. Banks was honored to speak to the *Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund Leadership Program* participants, regarding career success in the Federal sector. Currently, Dr. Banks is serving as a visiting scholar to Capella University and is an adjunct professor at Central Michigan University.

Dr. Banks also recently served a two-year term as Treasurer of the Executive Women in Government, an organization with a mission to “promote, support and mentor women for senior leadership positions in the Federal government.” In May 2010, Dr. Banks was selected to serve as an Ambassador to *Vision 2020*, by the Drexel University College of Medicine...Institute for Women’s Health and Leadership. As an Ambassador, she is participating in drafting the *Declaration of Equality*, the ten-year action agenda that will guide the work to bring the country closer to gender equality.

Dr. Banks is the proprietor of *Dr. Lesia M. Banks Enterprises*, an organization with a mission to “Create Career Connections.” As founder, Dr. Banks provides career counseling services, resume writing, and interview prepping. Because she is a scholar in Organizational Leadership she provides consulting services to businesses on areas spanning from talent acquisition and retention to building and sustaining employee moral to strategic and succession planning. The *pro bono* component of *Dr. Lesia M. Banks Enterprises, The Aisel Alliance*, provides career development training and career counseling to women that have been subjected to abuse, individuals with a history of incarceration and indigent individuals.

Banks explained, “I try to speak for people who cannot speak for themselves. Some are very quiet, shy—they don’t know how to communicate effectively. Others don’t know anything about appropriate actions in job seeking. I try to reach out and help these individuals. I try to help them develop career goals while learning how to maintain and keep a job.”

Dr. Banks earned an Associate Degree of Applied Science in Police Science from Danville Community College in 1985 and a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology/Law Enforcement in 1987 from Averett College, Danville, Virginia. In June 2001, she graduated with a Master of Science degree in Business Administration from Strayer University. In 2008 she graduated from Nova Southeastern University, with a Doctor of Education degree in Organizational

Leadership. She also became an alumni of the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government in Fall 2012 after completing an intensive Senior Executive Fellowship at Harvard.

Banks never envisioned that she would be a college graduate nor did she envision that she would eventually hold a doctorate degree; in fact, when she was in high school in Danville, she truly didn't know what a doctorate entailed. "I had very little direction about how to get into college or what courses to take in high school. I truly didn't know what to do, but I knew that Danville Community College was a place where I could start, but we didn't have the money. No one told me about loans and grants. My father wanted me to go to college, but he didn't have the financial means to send me; so my church, which I had attended all my life, actually took up an offering to help get me into my first quarter of college.

"Counselors at DCC taught me how to apply for grants and loans. By the second quarter, I had a Pell grant and that made my two years at DCC a reality."

But Banks knew she needed to prepare herself for a job since two years was what she envisioned would be her higher education attainment. In Brooks Powell's criminal justice class, Banks encountered passion for a subject such as she had never experienced before.

"He taught me law; 'the thundering rule of law' he taught me to have passion for my choices. My commitment, my desire to succeed came out of his law classes. But I had taken liberal arts classes and needed to change course. That meant I had to take six to seven classes per quarter to finish on time. The hard experience truly taught me perseverance, and since there were only two or three females in the classes, it taught me that nothing was closed to me." At graduation, her neighbor, the late Louis S. Cobbs, who continuously encouraged her throughout her high school years, told her it was not time to quit; to go enroll at Averett and continue pursuing her degree. The rest is history.

Because of her experience as an entering freshman without adequate funding, Banks recently created an endowed scholarship in honor of her late father, Robert Wayne Grasty and her church, High Street Baptist, to give back by paying it forward to deserving students in need of financial aid. The yearly \$1,000 scholarship is for students in either administration of justice or business. Banks emphasized, "I would like for students to know that getting an education shows commitment and ability to stick to the path chosen, even when the difficulties are enormous. This completion of the task says volumes to individuals they will meet throughout life and employers who have to make decisions on who to hire."

Banks often tells students that without the years of striving to complete her degrees, she would not have had the courage to face her greatest obstacle. "The greatest challenge I ever had was winning the fight against breast cancer. I have a picture of me completely bald and a certificate for completing chemotherapy

December 22, 2009, which I refer to when I am faced with challenges. These items remind me that I can face any challenge and succeed. My faith was the guiding principle in my success, and I truly believe I only came through the battle for my life because of that faith and from learning over the years to bounce back and keep on fighting for completion of the goal. Students must learn to follow through and apply themselves and make their dreams a reality.”

**The fourth honoree, Stephen Worley**, arrived at Danville Community College for a year and a half of study “as a student who needed a second chance.” Worley explained, “DCC was a perfect fit at the time. I was 19 years old, married with limited resources and needing essentially to start over, since my first college attempt had not been very successful. DCC gave me that chance to start over. I had earlier visited a friend from Northern Virginia attending the college. He was in the automotive program and very happy with DCC.”

Worley found that Danville Community College was the place where credits would seamlessly transfer and where he could pursue the bachelor’s degree he desired. “The professors were young, involved, interested in our futures; they challenged us to reach our potentials. The college prepared me to do upper-level coursework; when I transferred, I found myself very well prepared,” Worley emphasized.

Worley entered DCC with the objective of obtaining a business degree. “The preliminary business courses set me up for my next two years at Virginia Commonwealth University,” he said. Virginia Commonwealth University not only has a large business department but also has a medical school. “The medical school hired some of the business students to conduct a study. I thought ‘it’s helping me with my degree and it’s the opportunity for a summer job.’ I had never considered that hospitals are businesses. Once I spent that summer in a hospital, I’ve always been in a hospital working with the business aspect.”

Worley graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with his BS in Business Management and two years later, in 1974, completed his Master of Science in Business Administration. After graduation Worley became director of management engineering with American Health Services, Inc. in Washington, D.C.

In 1980 he joined Children's Hospital in New Orleans, Louisiana, as an assistant administrator, was promoted to chief operating officer two years later and became president and CEO in 1986.

With the partnership between Children’s Hospital and Touro Infirmary in 2009, Mr. Worley was appointed President & CEO of Louisiana Children’s Medical Center (LCMC), the system’s parent corporation, which includes Children’s Hospital, a 241-bed pediatric academic medical center with referrals from throughout Louisiana and the Gulf South; Touro Infirmary, a 347-bed adult

hospital; Children's Hospital's Calhoun Campus, which includes a 75-bed psychiatric hospital; and the 260-bed retirement center, Woldenberg Village.

Worley emphasized, "I am always interested in educating young people. Education is at the heart of these hospitals—they're considered teaching hospitals, training students, residents, trainees, Louisiana State University medical students and trainees from the local community college.

"My activities with Our Lady of Holy Cross College locally have also given me a chance to work intensely on educating young people. I serve on the Board of Regents for the college and am Chairman of the Finance Committee, activities that are interesting and rewarding. The college, with a student body of approximately 1,300 students, continues to be a place where learning expands, which is very important to me—we now offer two doctoral programs."

Commenting about his memories of Danville Community College, Worley explained that one of the positives was the small classes. "I knew the faculty, knew the staff; they took a personal interest in me and other students. I hope this is still the case. Community colleges are important places of learning—their classes should always be intimate learning situations. We learned to group study—to form alliances and friendships. We knew when to have fun at VIR or at picnics, but we also learned when we needed to work hard. My foundation at DCC has carried me forward through the years. It was the right fit at the time, and I know it has been the right fit for many others."

A member of the Children's Hospital International Executive Forum, Worley is on the Board of the Institute of Healthcare Executives and Suppliers. He is a past chairman of the board of the Blood Center for Southeast Louisiana, past chairman of the Louisiana Hospital Association, past chairman of the Metropolitan Hospital Council of New Orleans and past chairman of the board of the Child Health Corporation of America.

He is a past board member of the New Orleans Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Boy Scouts of America, Inroads/New Orleans, and the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions.