



\$57,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED TO OUTSTANDING STUDENTS

The 32nd Student Achievement Recognition Ceremony, held in Founders Hall on May 21, cast a spotlight on star students whose accomplishments merited special recognition. Amidst applause, students walked to the podium to receive their awards as faculty, staff and family members looked on proudly. The ceremony marked the culmination of hard work and dedication on the part of the students, many of whom face obstacles to their studies. President Cathryn L. Addy remarked, "Tonight shows that for Tunxis students, the journey is as important as the destination."

Tunxis Foundation board member, Tim Fitch, emceed the portion of the evening during which the

Foundation handed out over \$57,000 in scholarships. He explained that this was a big night for the Foundation because, "After spending all year raising money, this is the night we get to give a bunch of it away to students looking to make a better life for themselves." In closing Fitch added, "Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we've been able to make a lot of dreams come true by providing more than a quarter of a million dollars to students since 2011."

Congratulations to all of our deserving scholarship recipients and thanks to all the individuals, families and businesses who provided the funding to make this night possible.

SAVE THE DATE – NOVEMBER 12

On Thursday, November 12, Tunxis Community College Foundation will hold its annual **Economic Conference at the Farmington Marriott**. This breakfast, our major fundraiser, features a prominent speaker on business-related topics. Networking and registration begin at 7:30 a.m.

We're pleased to announce that our speaker this year is George Bodenheimer, former president and executive chairman of ESPN, Inc.

Bodenheimer began his career at ESPN as a driver in the mailroom and just 17 short years later became president. He is the author of the recently released business leadership memoir, *"Every Town Is a Sports Town: Business Leadership at ESPN, from the Mailroom to the Boardroom."* Nelson Algarin is our Student Speaker

More details on this year's event and sponsorship opportunities are available at tunxisfoundation.org. This event is an excellent networking opportunity!



2015
ECONOMIC CONFERENCE

AN ON-CAMPUS OASIS FOR TUNXIS VETERANS

The transition from serving in a combat zone back into civilian life is filled with challenges. Fortunately, for returning servicemen and women attending Tunxis, the Veterans' OASIS (Operation Academic Support for Incoming Service Members) helps with that transition by serving as an on-campus refuge. There, students can hang out, do their homework and make connections with other students who also face the challenge of transitioning back to civilian life.

Karen DeBari, an adjunct English professor at Tunxis, is the lifeblood of the OASIS. Under her guidance this organization has flourished and is rapidly becoming a model of best practices for other Veteran OASIS programs at colleges throughout Connecticut.

In addition to helping vets with issues like finding jobs, housing or navigating the VA system, the OASIS also hosts get-togethers like barbeques and movie nights for the



members. These social events are critical since, as DeBari says, "The camaraderie is key to these students. They tell you how much they miss their units. And, this is like a new unit for them - almost like a family."

Nelson Algarin is president of the Tunxis Veterans' Club and received the 2015 Tunxis Veterans' Club Leadership and Service Award. He echoes DeBari's comments by saying, "This place is a safe haven where there are no filters, no boundaries. I want people coming home to know that there's a place for you, we're here for you."

The Tunxis Foundation is proud to be a partner of the OASIS by helping to support those who have done so much for our country. Anyone interested in making a tax-deductible donation to the Veteran's Oasis Fund can do so by sending a check payable to the **"Tunxis Foundation VO Fund" to 271 Scott Swamp Road Farmington, CT 06032.**

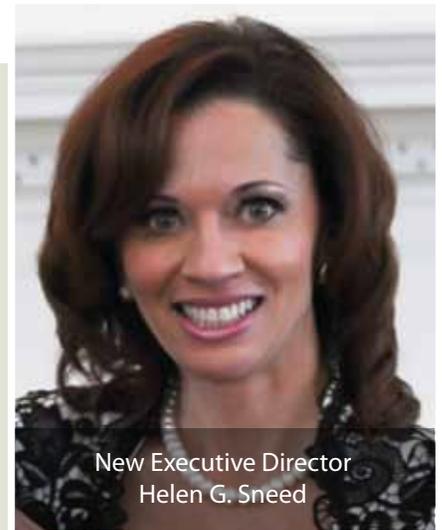
ANNOUNCING TUNXIS FOUNDATION'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Tunxis Community College Foundation is pleased to announce that, effective August 1, Helen G. Sneed of Bristol, CT will serve as its new executive director. In addition to being a former Tunxis student and graduate, she is the current vice president of the Tunxis Foundation Board of Directors. Sneed brings an in-depth knowledge of the organization and a passion for its mission to increase awareness and raise money to help support the students of Tunxis Community College in Farmington, CT.

"I can't imagine being able to find anyone who, because of her background, cares more about being able to help the students who are striving to help make

a better life for themselves and their families", said Charles Pagano, president of the Tunxis Foundation. "We were fortunate to find several very qualified candidates during our search that started back in the spring, but Helen was clearly the one we wanted".

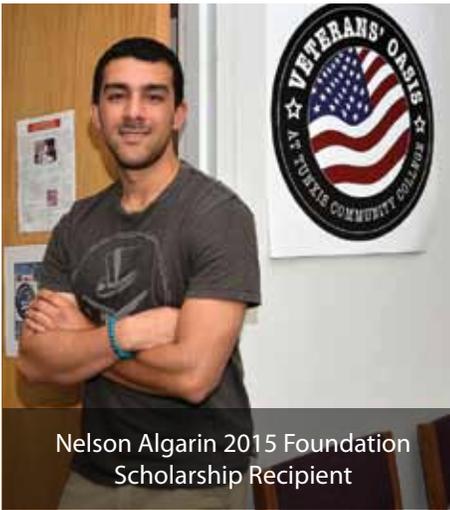
In addition to graduating from Tunxis, Sneed is a graduate of Central Connecticut State University and has an MBA from the University of New Haven. Her professional career has involved a variety of business and human resources roles, most recently at WFSB-TV Channel 3 and Aldin Associates. She is currently working for a nonprofit agency, collaborating with businesses, where she conducts community outreach and facilitates



New Executive Director
Helen G. Sneed

training at Gateway Community College in New Haven.

Sneed is eagerly looking forward to her new position. "Given how Tunxis helped make my dreams come true, I can't wait to take on this new challenge and help other students achieve their dreams," said Sneed. "This will give me a unique opportunity to give back to the institution that did so much for me."



Nelson Algarin 2015 Foundation Scholarship Recipient

A STUDENT VETERAN STRUGGLES TO FIT INTO CIVILIAN LIFE AND EMERGES AS STUDENT LEADER

turned to alcohol. "My four years in the military did not help release my anger, it only made it worse. I was a bomb waiting for the right moment to explode." During a personal crisis he reached a breaking point where he said to himself, "Not like this." He reached out to his family for help

and checked into The Department of Veterans Affairs for counseling. One year later Nelson was sober and ready to go back to school - but where? Given its proximity and affordability, Algarin chose Tunxis.

At New Britain High School, he hadn't always put forth his best effort and, as a result, earned C's. But with his newly found motivation, Algarin knew he had the ability to do better academically. Even with his new attitude, adjusting to life on the Tunxis campus was not easy. "The first semester was difficult," he says "I was afraid because I wasn't social and I didn't have much confidence." He found it hard to relate to his fellow freshmen, who seemed young in comparison and prone to taking things for granted. They had not experienced what Algarin had. "I saw more in four years than most people see in a lifetime."

It was in his second semester that he discovered the Veterans' OASIS on campus where he found a brotherhood of fellow student veterans. Inside the walls of OASIS, he could talk more freely and share stories of active combat that

he couldn't talk about with others. He credits the support he found at the OASIS with helping his transition.

It was at this point that he finally hit his stride, excelling academically and discovering a knack for writing. Today, he is known as one of the most prominent leaders on campus and he is currently serving as the president of the Tunxis Veterans' Club.

And the good news doesn't stop there. At the recently held Student Achievement Recognition Ceremony, he collected two scholarships from the Tunxis Foundation to help lighten his financial load, and he was the recipient of a Leadership and Service award for his involvement with the OASIS. His plans call for him to graduate from Tunxis next year with an associates degree in general studies, get his bachelor's degree and then attend medical school.

Said Algarin, "Four to five years ago I was angry but it didn't have to be that way. You can always make new choices." With plenty of new choices and opportunities ahead, his future couldn't be brighter. Congratulations Nelson!

Attired in a t-shirt, cargo shorts and flip flops, 23-year-old Nelson Algarin looks like a typical college student. His confident smile and clean-cut good looks belie his troubled past

as a former Marine struggling with personal demons. As he tells his story, he strokes the dog tags around his neck, those of a fallen comrade.

Algarin's return from Afghanistan began promisingly with a heartwarming welcome home and the excitement of returning to civilian life. Unfortunately, things began to unravel quickly. He soon found himself caught between living in the present and not being able to let go of the memories of the past. These memories included being shot in the back and losing two of his closest friends to war. In addition, he found he had difficulty relating to family and friends who seemed to view him differently.

The demands of being back in civilian life also took their toll on Algarin. Looking for a job, a car and the thought of going back to school overwhelmed him. He suffered from survivor's guilt and his feelings of isolation and anger grew. As he shut out family and friends he

"I saw more in four years than most people see in a lifetime."



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Thank You!

SCHOLARSHIP HONORS THE LIFE OF INSPIRING 78-YEAR-OLD GRADUATE

In a hospital room packed with family and friends, 78-year old Peggy Ficks achieved her lifelong goal of graduating from college.

Ficks was supposed to walk with her classmates at the Tunxis Community College Commencement ceremony but a terminal illness and hospitalization derailed that plan. Shortly after learning of the situation, Tunxis President Cathryn L. Addy and Dean of Students Kirk Peters decided to bring graduation to her. With *"Pomp and Circumstance"* playing on a cell phone, a fully robed Addy and Peters marched down the hall of the hospital wing to Peggy's hospital room. A private graduation followed and she earned her associate degree in general studies. Says her daughter Laura Ficks, "That degree made our mother's life complete. It was the last thing she wanted before she died. We will never be able to find words to describe the gift that Dr. Addy and Dr. Peters gave our mother. We will be forever grateful."

The road to a college diploma was anything but easy for Ficks. She was always interested in learning but

she put aside her educational goals when she married Dick, her husband of 49 years, while they immersed themselves in raising their three children. It wasn't until Peggy's late 50's, when her children were grown, that she decided to enroll at Tunxis, while Dick provided his typical support and encouragement.

Recollecting Peggy's days at Tunxis, Laura says, "We knew that family still came first. Mom balanced school with the needs of our Dad, sometimes only taking one or two classes a semester."

Classes weren't always easy for Ficks but she plodded on, determined to finish her degree, not only for herself, but also to be an inspiration to her family.

President Addy recalls, "She really wanted this for her grandchildren, to prove to them that nothing was ever impossible, that no dream, however long deferred, needed to go unfulfilled with the right amount of determination."

Sadly, Peggy Ficks passed away three days after receiving



Laura Ficks (on left) hands out the Peggy and Dick Ficks Scholarship in honor of her mother to its first recipient, Leslie Mroczek

her degree. The children were inspired both by their mother's journey and their father's support. Peggy and her siblings wanted to do something to honor their parents. They asked themselves, "How can we help change the lives of students at Tunxis?" To this end,

With "Pomp and Circumstance" playing on a cell phone, a fully robed Addy and Peters marched down the hall of the hospital wing to Peggy's hospital room for a private graduation.

they decided to create the Peggy and Dick Ficks Scholarship. Each year the fund will provide scholarships to students who, like Peggy, have overcome

obstacles and exemplify a love of learning.

This year's winner is Leslie Mroczek, a 2014 graduate of Plainville High School and a Dean's List student. She plans to pursue her associate degree at Tunxis and move on to Central Connecticut State University to pursue a bachelor's degree in art education. She has held down two part-time jobs and always exhibits an upbeat positive attitude. Laura Ficks said, "Our parents would be so excited to know this scholarship will make a difference in Leslie's life."



2015 scholarship recipients standing with Tunxis Foundation board member Tim Fitch (far right)

Did **YOU**
Know?



THE EMERGENCY FUND CAN HELP WHEN LIFE GETS TOUGH

You may know that the Tunxis Foundation (TCCF) has awarded a lot of money in scholarships for tuition and fees over the years - in fact, over \$370,000 since 2010. But, did you know that it also helps students struggling to pay for basic needs? The Student Emergency Fund provides a helping hand to students who find themselves in challenging situations. These may be veterans returning from combat, parents of a special needs child or students who have lost jobs.

Here's a look at some of the ways the Emergency Fund supported students in 2015:

- A Windows tablet was provided to a student who could not afford one and who needed it to take his online courses.
- An overdue utility bill was paid on behalf of a student working two part-time jobs and taking care of her disabled mother.
- The tuition for a phlebotomy course was paid for a recently laid-off single mother.

These relatively small disbursements generate big time rewards and ensure that students continue their studies and keep progressing toward their dream of a better life for themselves and their families.

So now you know.



Our new executive director Helen Sneed (third from left), her husband Gregory Sneed (left), and Alice Diaz (second from left) present the scholarship they established to Paulina Winkler (far right)

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