You’re invited to visit Forsyth Tech’s Fabulous 50th Anniversary Online Auction – and to return again and again between now and November 30. All proceeds go to the Forsyth Tech Foundation to benefit student scholarships, faculty development, and instructional technology.

Bid on exciting experiences and gotta-have products, including:

- An Alaskan fishing trip for two
- A Blu-ray DVD player
- An iPod
- A Stay & Play package for your foursome at the new Ballyhack Golf Club in Virginia
- An Alaskan fishing trip for two …and much, much more.

What a rich history Forsyth Tech has to build on! Right from the start, we’ve had leaders with vision, instructors with dedication, and community partners who have helped with everything from letting us know just what skills are needed in the marketplace to financing new classrooms, labs, and shops.

In this 50th anniversary year, we salute all those people who have contributed to Forsyth Tech’s steady, intelligent growth, and we celebrate the many thousands of individuals who have found just what they need here to better their own lives and to make a strong contribution to our local economy and quality of life.

But backward looking has never been our focus, and resting on our laurels has never been our way. The most exciting and important days are still ahead of us. At this moment in history we are in the midst of a transformation of similar magnitude to the Industrial Revolution.

How people work and what they need to know to be able to function in this technologically advanced, information-loaded, increasingly globalized economy are central to this transformation. And now more than ever Forsyth Tech must be not only in step with our community but fully involved in shaping the future.

As we enter our second half century, Forsyth Tech is committed to the ongoing development of forward-looking technologies including biotechnology, nanotechnology, and comprehensive information technologies. We’re committed to helping attract and support employees of such innovative organizations as the Institute for Regenerative Medicine, Taraxacum, and our newest corporate citizen, Caterpillar. And we are committed to building the highly skilled workforce that will be able to compete and succeed in the 21st century.

Dr. Gary M. Green
Making the Comforts of Home a Little More Comfortable

A team of Forsyth Tech carpentry students teamed up with a group of advocates for the disabled to help create a fantasy giveaway at the Dixie Classic Fair. The students offered their skills to The Adaptables, Inc., and Rebuilding Together of Forsyth County to do the finishing work on the “Candy Cottage” project, a playhouse designed for disabled children. The cottage is fully equipped with electricity, double-pane windows, an access ramp, and a door specially sized for wheelchair use. The groups were trying to educate the public about the need for universal design and accessibility in building construction that allows the disabled to live more independently.

Higher Calling to a High Office

A Forsyth Tech faculty member was chosen as one of only 50 faculty and staff across the country to be part of the Interfaith Leadership Training Institute at the White House this fall. Rev. Chris Towles teaches humanities, philosophy, and religion at Forsyth Tech. He is also a college chaplain at Wake Forest University. “I’ve been working with students who want to be interfaith leaders,” Towles said. “The leadership skills I gain from the training sessions will help those students be better leaders in their own communities.” The Interfaith Leadership Institute works in partnership with the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships in Washington, D.C.

First Down to Lasting Honor

If you ever need someone to plow through a tough situation, Forsyth Tech Student Success Director Joe McIntosh is your man. In mid-October, Joe was inducted into the Davidson County Sports Hall of Fame in honor of his remarkable football career. Joe rushed for 4,000 yards and 50 touchdowns as a Lexington High School Yellow Jacket in the late 1970s. Later, as a player for the NC State Wolfpack, Joe rushed for more than 3,000 yards. He finished his college career second only to Ted Brown on the NC State all-time rushing list. Joe and five other inductees were honored at a ceremony at the J. Smith Young YMCA. The featured speaker was former Buffalo Bills wide receiver Perry Turtle.

High Fives

Piedmont Federal Savings Bank honored Forsyth Tech’s 50th anniversary year in a creative way by donating fifty $500 scholarships to eligible students. Forsyth Tech graduate and Piedmont Federal COO Mike Hauer says the scholarships are an indication of the strong connection between the two institutions. “It’s a natural,” Hauer said. “Piedmont and Forsyth Tech are both great local institutions. We’re providing the means for customers to buy homes and develop the community. Forsyth Tech is developing students to give them the means to achieve their career goals.” Learn more about Mike Hauer’s Forsyth Tech connection in: Why I Support Forsyth Tech.

Yum! Forsyth Tech Instructor Cooks Up a Winner

Forsyth Tech English instructor Dr. Kristen Bedfield certainly knows her way around the English language, and now, the nation recognizes her for knowing her way around the kitchen. Kristen’s original dish, Lemon Artichoke Chicken, was chosen as the winner this fall in a national grocery chain recipe competition. “I actually never thought about sharing a recipe before. I just entered it on a whim,” she said. “It’s been a regular dish at home for the last four or five years.” On its website, Food Lion each month asks for a variety of recipe entries, chooses 50 at random, and then prepares each of the 50 dishes for a panel of judges.

Consider the Block Rocked

Forsyth Tech helped rock the Winston-Salem downtown Saturday, September 18. Rock the Block event organizers say between $1,000 and $4,000 people attended the festival, which featured the Rock This Battle of the bands among high school music groups. Forsyth Tech was a presenting sponsor for the band competition and was able to connect with many high school students who might consider Forsyth Tech in the future. Hundreds of people enjoyed special “FT Silly Bands” and the Forsyth Tech USB wristband traffic.

Setting the Curve in Adult Literacy

Forsyth Tech’s Dean of Adult Literacy Michael Harris has been honored by the Leadership Excellence Academy with a first-of-its-kind national certification. Michael was named a Certified Manager in Program Improvement. The Academy recognized leaders from only nine states in the country. “I really appreciate it,” Michael said. “Dealing with adult students takes more than just instruction. Adult students need a lot of support educationally, academically, and economically.” The Program Improvement certification requires two years of training on research, best practices, and business judgment.
On a summer day in 1960, six flatbed trucks rolled into Winston-Salem on Interstate-40. They carried about three-quarters of a million dollars worth of machine tools, on loan from the federal government, and bound for a new school that was slated to open in September — the Industrial Education Center.

"It was bigger equipment than I had ever seen," remembers Dr. Harley P. Affeldt, one of the first employees of the Industrial Education Center (IEC), which was run as a program of the Winston-Salem school system. When the equipment arrived there was nowhere to store it at the site that had been selected — land that had once been the city dump — on Link Road. The first two buildings were under construction.

When the school opened on September 6, it replaced the very limited vocational training that had been offered at Winston-Salem's three white high schools and its black high school. Students were bused in from their home high schools for three hours of instruction each day — an early attempt at school desegregation. All the students were male.

Adults could attend classes at the IEC at night, and many people who went to work at the big companies in town, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco and Western Electric, learned their vocation there.

In the next few years the city and county school systems merged, North Carolina started a state community college system, and the Industrial Education Center expanded and saw its first female students, in business and secretarial programs.

What started out as a high school trade training program became Forsyth Technical Institute, and later Forsyth Technical Community College. The main campus, landlocked because it was never envisioned as a college campus, grew in place but is rarely described as being on Link Road. Instead it takes its affectionate nickname, the University of Silas Creek, from the major thoroughfare it overlooks.

It's quite possible that some of those original machine tools are still in use. What's more certain is that the acquisition of that equipment set the tone and the pace for what was to come.

As Harley Affeldt, who was the counselor-coordinator of the IEC and who served as Forsyth Tech's president from 1971 to 1981 and as dean of engineering for the next decade, recalls, "The National Industrial Equipment Reserve was a new program aimed at putting more vocational education in high schools. Two leaders from R.J.R. and Western Electric heard about the program and traveled around the country looking for machine tools for the IEC. We were the first school in the country to get these tools; we got the first big bite.

We had the best-equipped school machine shop in the nation, with the most up-to-date equipment. That gave us the foundation to move ahead."
Growing Up ~ From Trade School to Technical College

Are Technicians People?" was the title of a paper written by Dr. Dallas Herring in 1962. Herring was an early proponent of the idea that bringing industry to North Carolina and providing an educated workforce would be the best way to improve the standard of living for everyone in the state. As a member of the State Board of Education under Governor Luther Hodges, he was instrumental in the creation of the Industrial Education Centers that were approved by the General Assembly in 1957.

But as the title of his 1962 paper implied, Herring had long believed that vocational students needed a general education in addition to their technical training. "We do not need and we do not want a society of technicians who have no sense of values in the realm of the humanities," he wrote. "We do not want a society of specialists who are unaware in a meaningful way of their larger responsibility to humanity, the State and themselves."

Under Governor Terry Sanford, who was elected in 1960, Dr. Herring's vision became a reality. A comprehensive community college system was created by the Omnibus Higher Education Act of 1963, which brought together the existing Industrial Education Centers and junior colleges into a system that has grown to comprise 58 community colleges.

As one of the state Industrial Education Centers, Forsyth Tech was given two years to phase out its high school students. General education and continuing education courses were added to what had been essentially a trade school. Degree, diploma, and certificate programs multiplied to almost 200. Enrollment, which had started with a few hundred students in the early '60s, topped 10,000 students in credit programs in 2010. The number of employees expanded from 40 people to over 1,100.

Forsyth Tech is one of a small number of colleges in the system that has kept the "technical" in community college. "We have preserved the word 'Technical' in our name," said Dr. Gary Green, the current president of Forsyth Tech. "That has been a conscious decision of our board. We don't want to lose that technical connection."

"The return of veterans from World War II and the Korean War was a major impetus for the creation of technical and community colleges throughout the United States. Instructors from the early years of Forsyth Tech remember that many of their students were war veterans. Since then, Forsyth Tech has helped veterans of the Vietnam War gain the skills to thrive in civilian life and work. And now another wave of veterans is looking to Forsyth Tech for education to enhance employment options -- soldiers who have served in the Middle East conflicts.

"In the early years, as far as the professional community was concerned, this was the Dirty Hands School, the College of Last Resort. But our students were recruited nationally from big organizations like the Los Alamos nuclear program. Our electronic technicians were in high demand, and our graduates have been successful. The community has always accepted Forsyth Tech -- the fact that all the bond issues have passed is an indication of that."

~ Dr. Harley Affeldt, President, 1971–1981

"This has always been an excellent school. Now everybody knows about Forsyth Tech, but for years we were The Best Kept Secret in Town."

~ Dr. Susan Allred, Forsyth Tech's first female Vice President

"We made ourselves The Community's College."

~ Dr. Desna Wallin, President, 1995–2001

The Presidential Suite: Headed in the Right Direction

Here are the people who have had their hands on the helm since Forsyth Tech's beginnings as an Industrial Education Center:

Mr. Albert S. Johnson
1960 – 1963

Dr. Ernest B. Parry
1963 – 1971

Mr. Ray Cates
1967 – 1968

Acting President while Dr. Parry attended graduate school

Dr. Harley P. Affeldt
1971 – 1981

Mr. T. Glen Fleeman Jr.
June 1995

Dr. Bob H. Greene
1981 – 1995

Dr. Desna L. Wallin
1995 – 2001

Dr. Gary M. Green
2001 – Present
With all the changes 50 years have brought, there’s considerable consistency to what students of every decade have to say about Forsyth Tech. They remember and praise their fine instructors.

Top-notch teaching has been a priority right from the start. Harley Affeldt, who spent 26 years in various administrative capacities, including president, says the emphasis has always been more on teachers who were competent and could relate to students, and less on academic credentials. And with technical training, that difference could be quite obvious.

“It’s easier to see results when you’re working on an automobile,” he said. “We worked hard at getting good instructors, people who could really help people.”

The same skill and dedication apply to teachers in the arts and sciences, according to Traci Rutledge. She was an adjunct science teacher at Forsyth Tech for 15 years and has been a full-time faculty member since 2005. This year she became the first full-time science teacher at the new Stokes County Center, where she will teach both chemistry and biology.

Like a great many Forsyth Tech instructors over the years, Traci’s association with the college began when she was a student. She’d already earned her bachelor’s degree in biology, and she went to Forsyth Tech to get a degree in paralegal technology.

“Forsyth Tech cares about students,” she said. “Since we don’t have a research function, like the universities, the people who teach at community colleges are there to teach.”

Bill Wilder, who came to Forsyth from Virginia as an auto mechanics student in 1964, went on to teach auto mechanics at Forsyth Tech for 30 years, and founded what is now the Richard Childress Race Car Technology Program, expresses the way so many Forsyth Tech instructors over the years have understood their role and purpose:

“My footprint and my legacy will be the students I had in class.”
Almost as soon as Harley Affeldt became president of Forsyth Tech in 1971, he started getting calls from the leaders of the two big hospitals in town, N.C. Baptist Hospital and Forsyth Memorial Hospital. They wanted the young technical institute to start a nursing education program.

“I told them we couldn’t do it with the financing we had,” Dr. Affeldt remembers. “The three big charitable foundations in town gave us $450,000 to help us get started. Both hospitals made a commitment, and we used their facilities for training.”

Since then, Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center and Forsyth Medical Center have become among the region’s largest employers, and the Associate Degree in Nursing and Allied Health programs at Forsyth Tech, along with continuing education courses for healthcare workers, have become the largest community college healthcare training program in the state.

It’s a virtual certainty that any patient in our local hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes will receive care from nurses, x-ray technicians, phlebotomists, respiratory therapists, and many more healthcare specialists who received their training at Forsyth Tech. And so it goes through our police and fire departments, our manufacturing, marketing, and distribution companies; our construction companies; and the cutting-edge biotech, nanotech, and medical research initiatives that we look to for thousands more jobs in the future.

Forsyth Tech works directly with more than 600 businesses in the community. Those relationships take many forms, from computer and management training at employer sites, to co-op education and internships for students, to the community advisory boards that guide the development of each new degree program.

Since 1989, Bob Leak has been the president of Winston-Salem Business, Inc., which has the responsibility of recruiting new business. Labor and training are key to every project that comes his way, he said.

An advantage both to companies newly arrived here and to our existing businesses is Forsyth Tech’s capability of providing technical training with more sophisticated offerings in leadership, management, and advanced IT programs, he said.

“Here businesses can get it all in one place,” he said. “To compete, you’ve got to be on the cutting edge and to see where the next opportunity is. Forsyth Tech does a real good job of that.”

The special niche of the technical community college is to educate and prepare people for work, and the history of Forsyth Tech is the history of how the skills needed for employment have changed and evolved over the past 50 years. The crowning achievement of Forsyth Tech is how finely attuned the college has been, and is, to those evolving needs and to developing the programs of study to build the highly skilled workforce that is needed to keep our economy healthy and growing.

As Forsyth Tech celebrates 50 years of service to individuals, employers, and the whole community, the credit belongs — as it always has — to the exceptionally dedicated people who work here.
PULLING UP STOKES

Forysth Tech is the designated community college for two of North Carolina’s 100 counties: Forsyth and Stokes. Making classes and other services more accessible to residents of Stokes County is a priority for the college, and the past several months have seen exciting developments.

In September, Forysth Tech marked the opening of its first permanent location in the county: The Stokes County Center in Walnut Cove, right in the middle of the county, is a modest eight-room pod for now, but it’s filled with learners day and night.

During the day it is home to Stokes Early College, a program of the Stokes County Schools and Forysth Tech, in which high school students can simultaneously earn their high school diploma and an associate’s degree in five years. The Early College started in 2009 at the Northwest Forysth Center and moved to the Walnut Cove location in August, where it now has over 100 students. Principal Kimberly Marion says the nontraditional learning environment challenges teachers to teach differently and encourages students to think differently about how to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in our information- and technology-driven 21st century world.” A great advantage to these motivated young people is that they pay no tuition for their college courses.

Adult classes are held in the evenings at the same location.
Forsyth Technical Community College serves more than 50,000 students annually in degree, diploma, and certificate programs, as well as continuing education courses. To make educational opportunities widely available, and to meet the needs for a well-educated, skilled workforce, Forsyth Tech depends on private contributions from people like you.

The Foundation of Forsyth Tech, a nonprofit organization, is the fundraising arm of the College. Your gift to Forsyth Tech through the Foundation will support:

> Scholarships for deserving students
> Technology for classrooms, labs, and shops
> Professional development grants for faculty and staff

**Your Gift Creates a Strong College and a Strong Community**

Choose your level of support:
- President’s Club $10,000 and up
- Pinnacle Club $5,000 – $9,999
- Pacesetter Club $1,000 – $4,999
- Directors $500 – $999
- Leaders $250 – $499
- Champions $100 – $249
- Friends Up to $99

**Give online:** Use your credit card to make a secure donation at www.forsythtech.edu/support/giving-to-forsyth-tech.

**Send a check:** Make your check payable to Forsyth Tech Foundation. Mail to The Foundation of Forsyth Tech, 2100 Silas Creek Parkway, Winston-Salem, NC 27103-5197.

Get more information: Learn about gifts you can make in honor of or in memory of individuals, matching gifts, charitable trusts and bequests, and gifts of stocks and property. Call Dr. Sharon B. Covitz, Executive Director, The Foundation of Forsyth Tech at 336.734.7525 or email scovitz@forsythtech.edu.
Elizabeth Sprinkle wanted to be a dancer. Back in her high school days at Wade Hampton High School in Taylors, S.C., she playfully thought MTV looked like a great career choice. But soon after graduation, MTV wasn't waiting for her, after graduation, MTV looked like a great choice. Back in the ’80s, Elizabeth Sprinkle wanted everything from databases to medical technologies that can help. "It was just meant to be!"

It’s hard to miss Charles Simmons on campus. While other students are dressed like, well, students, you’ll often see Charles in a coat and tie. “I like the idea of always being presentable. I think it helps other people around me polish up their act too.”

It’s no surprise that he’s considered a positive influence on the people around him. His easy manner and his smile are infectious. He’s also a troubadour. Charles is Forsyth Tech’s first dual admissions student as part of an agreement with Winston-Salem State University (WSSU). Under the agreement, students submit a single application for both schools. Once started at Forsyth Tech, students automatically qualify for later admission to WSSU. In this case, Charles will finish his coursework at Forsyth Tech this spring and then have to spend only one year at WSSU, where he can earn his B.A. in business administration in 2012. It’s a lot of work, but it’s no obstacle. “I like pressure,” he said with a smile. “It pushes me. I have a thirst for that. My dad always says ‘To be lucky, you’ve got to be prepared.’”

For a young man wise beyond his years and busier than most, Charles shows the world many sides of himself. Namely, he’s a poet. “I discovered I had a passion for it while pursuing a young lady’s attention a few years back,” he chuckled. The relationship never blossomed, but the poetry did. Today, he has enough material for a couple of books. He’s exploring ways to get Life and Love published. “It’s all inspired by nature and the people around you,” he said.

If that wasn’t enough, Charles has also been working a fashion model since he was approached by a recruiter in 2007. “At the time, I didn’t want to do it, but then I got good at it.” Some of the more challenging work happens with a local group called "House of Legends" that specializes in live mannequins who stand motionless for minutes at a time. For someone with so much energy, that’s a challenge. It’s a challenge also recognized by his father, a retired Marine. Charles quotes him often. “He’d say, ‘Son, you’ve got to slow down. You’ll miss something if you’re not paying attention.’”

“The only guarantee in life is change,” Charles said, as only a poet could."
A Life to Be Savored

“Live! That’s the message. Life is a banquet and most poor suckers are starving to death.”

–Rosalind Russell, Auntie Mame, 1958

Joseph Jacobson has been catering events and private parties for the Forsyth Tech community for over 20 years. Today, Chef JJ serves as the college’s executive chef and manager of Food Services in charge of The Grill and Bytes & Beans – the campus coffee shop. His résumé in the hospitality industry is exhaustive, spanning 50 years—a real “soup to nuts” list of caterers, restaurants, and country clubs.

When Chef wasn’t working the kitchen, he was off performing in musical theater or summer stock, amassing a list of shows to his credit that ranged from Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *The King and I* to Godspell and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. He shared in three Tony Awards as a silent partner in a small production company on his way to leading a Forrest Gump-like existence when it came to the people he met along the way.

He was there when Yul Brynner shaved his head in the ‘50s, found favor with the Rat Pack in the ‘60s, and hung out with James Taylor and his own “holy host of others” in the ‘70s.

Far from anything “cooked up,” the following is a sampling of stories of a man who truly has had an appetite for life.

“An Empty Belly Is the Best Cook”

Grandmother Bubby Jacobson

“I grew up in a Jewish ghetto in the South Bronx,” says Chef. “Let’s just say it was challenging. As a famous comedian once said, my family’s menu had two choices: take it or leave it.”

As poor as Chef’s family was back then, he still remembers with great fondness some of the favorite foods of his childhood.
“Do you remember Rosalind Russell in Mame?” Chef continues. “That was my Aunt Betty – eccentric, strong personality, very perspicacious. She’s the one who got me into acting.”

A psychiatrist with a successful practice in Greenwich Village during the ‘40s and ‘50s, Aunt Betty was on the frontline of Freudian psychology, helping aspiring young actors wrestle with their demons. In her précieux nephews, she saw something special. I was 4 when I started acting professionally. “I was too young to realize it then, but he was there, watching me,” says Chef.

“I was chosen by “God” to be his energetic assistant. God in the kitchen.”

When Chef Charles finally retired, he presented his young protégée with the same set of knives he’d been given years before at the end of the day. “By the time you spoke to him, he was speaking to you,” says Chef with a warm smile.

Back home, his manager and close friend of Aunt Betty, Stuart Silver, was busy buying up majority shares in restaurants, catering businesses, and country clubs with the young boy’s earnings. When Chef finally took a break from the road, he turned his attentions to his mounting portfolio of “silent partnerships” and went to work closer to home.

“My parents decided they wanted me home, so, being a smart alec 9-year-old, I walked into my manager’s office and told him, ‘Stuart, if I want it, I will get it done.’ He agreed, providing I do it my way. I expected him to put me in a tuxedo so I could be the host. Chef nodded his head with a warm smile. ‘For two years I washed dishes.’”

To play, like an appetizer into Uncle Y’s kitchen, Chef suddenly straightened up in his chair and launched into a Shakespearean-like soliloquy: “Be gone and never show your face but in these walls again,” he bellowed, and then, just as suddenly, he relaxed. “That’s the only line I remember.”

“I could be the boss.” Chef nodded his head with a warm smile. “Please sir, I want some more.”

“I was too young to realize it then, but he was there, watching me,” says Chef.

“You never learn what you didn’t experience? Never cater a party for that many people again.”

By the end of the go-go ‘70s, Chef was looking to slow down. In his late ‘30s, he surrendered to the pressures of the gypsy catering life and formed J. Breton’s Continental Caterers, the largest gypsy catering company in the country. Like the Bus’s “Truck tour of his youth, Continental took the show on the road, catering parties for the rich and famous like Kirk Douglas and President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter. They also catered huge public events like the opening party for the USS Aircraft Carrier Enterprise, the opening party for the USS Aircraft Carrier Intrepid’s Sea, Air & Space Museum on New York’s Hudson River.

We served nearly 50,000 people on that long weekend with a staff of 1,000,” Chef remembers. “I spent three days in the galley and never saw the ship, slept there too. You know what you learned from that experience? Never cater a party for that many people again.”

“Before 9/11 business was great,” Chef says. “I didn’t need the publicity. I felt I’d done that already in my life. But by then, Chef had become a Southern convert. He became a Southern convert. Outside the union, “I remember it was Willie was cooking so he could taste it. “I spent three days in the galley and never saw the ship, slept there too. You know what I learned from that experience? Never cater a party for that many people again.”

“Before 9/11 business was great,” Chef says. “I didn’t need the publicity."
An Interview with Paul Kindley
Adult Literacy Coordinator for Stokes County

Paul, you helped start one of the first cell phone companies in America, and you helped build one of the first fiber-optic networks in America. You've lived all over the country, and you've traveled all over the world. What brought you to Stokes County?

A I decided in midlife to take some time off to do the things most of us talk about doing if we could. I also decided that I wanted to return to North Carolina to live. I wound up in Stokes County only by happenstance. The brother of one of the parents of my sister's next-door neighbor called me to say that he had a place at Hanging Rock he wanted to sell. I bought it and began my sabbatical years. I traveled, studied art, studied music, learned to play classical guitar, and did lots of volunteer work. I lived the life of a want-a-be Renaissance man.

Q And how did you connect with Forsyth Tech?

A I saw an ad for an introduction to the Internet course Forsyth Tech was offering in Stokes County. I enrolled in the class and did well. My background was in technology, and I had worked for Wang Labs in the early days. I took a couple more computer classes. One thing led to another, and I was offered an opportunity to teach. Not long afterward John Hartman, who was a friend of mine from the contra dance community, asked John and I changed roles, and I was offered an opportunity to teach. Not long afterward John Hartman, who was a friend of mine from the contra dance community, asked John and I changed roles, and I was offered an opportunity to teach. Not long afterward John Hartman, who was a friend of mine from the contra dance community, asked

Q Tell me a little bit about the student population.

A My students range in age from 16 to their mid-80s. Typically they are not literate; they just have box skills. My students have mid-to-low level basic skills in reading, math, and language.

Q What is the high school dropout rate in Stokes County?

A One out of four students drop out in each year of high school.

Q And nationally there are studies that show that half of students who do graduate don’t have high school level skills.

A Yes. If the student dropped out of school in the latter grades of high school and they have good aptitude and good basic skills, they can often breez through the process. However, that is not my typical student.

Q How would you describe your most typical student?

A My most typical students dropped out in middle school. They dropped out because they felt they did not fit in. Imagine what your life would be like if you dropped out of school in the eighth grade. In addition, they often were already disengaged from the process, and their skills stopped growing long before they dropped out. My students often struggle to read for understanding. They don’t have the basic skills of the words. They also struggle with the written and spoken word. It is difficult to master 10th grade English if you didn’t go to the 10th grade. They struggle most of all with math.

Q What motivates them to enroll in the basic education program?

A The typical student that I teach comes to me as a GED tester and he or she says, “I dropped out of school. I want to get a GED.” The student often has two or three children, a full-time job, and sometimes they are taking care of a parent. They come to me and say, “I want to be literate. I want to learn. I want to have skills.”

Q Tell me a little bit about the basic education program?

A Yes. There is a federal mandate that if a child drops out of school before he or she completes the 10th grade, the school system must offer him or her a biography education program. The typical student will come to me as a GED tester and he or she says, “I dropped out of school. I want to get a GED.” The student often has two or three children, a full-time job, and sometimes they are taking care of a parent. They come to me and say, “I want to be literate. I want to learn. I want to have skills.”
A Student Not Unlike Ours: An Open Letter to Basic Education Instructors

By Paul Kindley

Let me tell you the story of a student not unlike most of our students. This student was the third child born into a family who lived in a slum area called “bog town,” located in a mill town here in the Piedmont. His parents were first generation off the farm. Neither parent finished more than a few grades in school. He was the first child on either side of his family to be born in a hospital. His father worked in the mill, and his mom stayed home in the tradition of the time. To use the language of the ladies at the church, the family was “poor but clean.” The dad worked 16 hours a day, plus 10 hours on Saturday and often half days on Sunday. The dad continued at this pace for over 17 years. The home had no insulation. In fact, you could see through the walls to the outside. In winter, our student slept under layers of quilts so heavy that he could not roll over. There was no indoor plumbing. The room worked hard. There were three-course meals every day, although often a full meal consisted of cornbread and milk. When the family could afford pinto beans, that was a three-course meal. As an infant, our student’s diet was built around a “rag soaked in sugar and water.”

Our student’s family was racked with dysfunction. Both the mother and the father were alcoholics. In our student’s home, the Saturday Night Fights was not a TV show.

As time went by, it turned out that our student was a decent athlete. He was bright, and he was athletic. Given the family profile, there was no way he was given educational support or instruction in the home. In junior high, he began to meet the marginal players in society as he hung out on the playgrounds after school. However, fate was kind. At the same time, he was close to becoming “president” of detention hall, he was chosen president of his class. You can see his future direction was hanging by a thread between productive citizen and juvenile delinquent.

Fortunately for our student, a keen mind kept him in academic good graces and gifted athletic ability kept him in school. Now we come to the point of this tale: In high school, this student in a small seat of non-direction found the beginnings of a sense of direction. How did this happen? The answer is simple: contact with committed, involved teachers.

Foremost among these was his 10th-grade English teacher, Mrs. Geneva Highfill. Mrs. Highfill spotted his competitive nature and somehow inspired him to be the first student in the history of her teaching to achieve a perfect score on her “drills.” When all was said and done, she gave him the gift of speaking properly, a gift that would open many doors of otherwise-closed. Years later, our student was a featured speaker at her funeral.

Then came Mrs. Joseph, who quipped an innate curiosity for travel and inspired a love of learning Spanish through readings in The Maltese Falcon. Lastly, came Mrs. Roberts, his chemistry teacher. More significantly, she was his debate coach. Our student never learned a thing about chemistry even though he earned an “A” in the class. However, he did receive the Degree of Merit and the Degree of Honor from the National Forensic League for excellence in public speaking and debate.

The combined influences of these three teachers set a course for life. Our student was the first in his family to ever attend college. Our student earned a scholarship to a prestigious state university. However, he turned the scholarship back to the school because he could earn more working days and nights and paying his own way.

Following college and graduate school, our student entered the business world. In time, he went on to create not one, but two of the most prestigious companies in America. In the early ’80s, he was named to the Who’s Who list of the most influential business leaders in the world. He retired at age 45. As the facts would require, our student now works in education with the lowest level of learners.

My point is to share with you from my personal experience how important you are in the lives of our students, many of whom have the same socioeconomic black marks of the student described above. As I have said many times, please try to remember that you may be the last instructor of many of our students will ever see. If you are able to open a door to learning, you can dramatically change the opportunity for a better life, as evidenced in this tale of a student not unlike ours.
Ruth Oberg is the kind of nurse you want in your corner. She never gives up. Ruth’s dream of becoming a nurse came true this year. After graduating with high honors from the Forsyth Tech nursing program, she was hired at Lutheran Home in Winston-Salem this summer. Becoming an LPN naturally takes a tremendous amount of work and dedication, but for Ruth, it also meant overcoming a series of life-changing obstacles.

Her drive to serve others started while growing up with her grandparents in Lewistown, Montana. Service was part of daily life. “Sometimes I’d catch one of our chickens and visit our neighbor who had chickens years before but was homebound due to illness,” she said. Ruth recalls hours with her cousins catching frogs and skipping rocks at the creek that ran through her grandmother’s property. “It was a great place to grow up.”

**Life of a Pastor’s Wife**

Her nursing education began in 1981 at Montana State University at Bozeman. After completing three years of a four-year program, life circumstances would not allow her to finish. When she and husband Jerry married in 1985, Jerry’s 20-year career as a pastor for Independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ moved them to congregations from South Dakota to Iowa to Oklahoma. The moves put her nursing dreams on hold, but they never stopped her habit of service. Over the years, she worked with special needs children and as a bereavement chaplain for an Oklahoma hospice.

As 2006 began to unfold, Ruth’s daughter, Katie, was entering her senior year at Duke University. Ruth and Jerry decided it was a great opportunity to be closer to Katie and pursued another line of service nearby. They became “teaching-parents” at the Rainbow Center for Children, a group home in Wilkesboro, N.C. The moves put her nursing dreams on hold, but they never stopped her habit of service. Over the years, she worked with special needs children and as a bereavement chaplain for an Oklahoma hospice.

In September of that year with Jerry still needing care, Ruth was facing surgery to remove her appendix. The surgery went well, but afterward, her doctors knew something wasn’t right. She soon found herself being examined by a team of mystified specialists. After three weeks of medical detective work, the diagnosis was peritoneal cancer so rare that only 100 cases are reported in the United States each year. It is treated in only two hospitals in the country: one in Ohio, and Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem.

“Shake and Bake” Surgery

“The Lord brought us here to Winston-Salem so I could be treated if I’m ever going to be cancer-free,” she said. In Ruth’s case, the treatment was equally rare. The doctors call it “shake and bake” surgery. Since the cancer cells had attacked the fluid surrounding her internal organs, surgeons had to literally remove the organs, remove any cancer they saw, put everything back in place, and then slosh a heated chemotherapy solution in her body cavity. She’s been cancer-free ever since. The surgery and recovery were not easy, but Ruth says it paid off in more ways than one. After her diagnosis, she pleaded with her husband to have a new family dog. Soon after, a shelter puppy named Belle joined the clan and was whisked away to visit mom in the hospital. Ruth beams when talking about her daughter. “Katie smuggled Belle into the hospital for a visit when I had the shake and bake surgery,” she giggles.

Today, Ruth still helps take care of Jerry, who is expected to begin dialysis conversations with Katie about their profession. At Lutheran Home, nursing supervisor Ann Corns says Ruth seems right at home. “She’s very mature and easygoing. She just comes across so confident.” Corns says she thinks Ruth’s performance is an illustration of the quality of nursing instruction at Forsyth Tech. “They’ve really brought in some great students here.”

**Charting Her Own Course**

Ruth Oberg might be one of the best-educated nurses you’ll ever meet. In addition to her LPN degree from Forsyth Tech, she has earned a bachelor’s degree in theology and both a master’s and doctorate degree in biblical counseling from Tyndale Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

“God tells us He’s got a purpose for us, and nursing and counseling are my purpose.” At the time, she had no idea how closely those goals would apply to the personal challenges to come. In September of that year with Jerry still needing care, Ruth was facing surgery to remove her appendix. The surgery went well, but afterward, her doctors knew something wasn’t right. She soon found herself being examined by a team of mystified specialists. After three weeks of medical detective work, the diagnosis was peritoneal cancer so rare that only 100 cases are reported in the United States each year. It is treated in only two hospitals in the country: one in Ohio, and Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem.

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Ruth says it’s also an illustration of the quality of her background. “My grandmother was always a constant source of encouragement,” Ruth said. “She’d be proud of me today.” Her daughter is, too. “Mom, you’re my hero,” Katie smiled. “You never give up.”
How do you tell people about all the amazing opportunities for educational and personal growth at Forsyth Tech in less than two minutes? It sounds impossible, but a class of Digital Effects and Animation (DEA) students recently took on that task, and the result is a video that’s now on the Forsyth Tech website, www.ForsythTech.edu. It’s called “The Story of You at Forsyth Tech,” and this is the story of how it came to be.

It started with Herb Burns, the DEA Department Chair. Only three North Carolina community colleges have DEA programs, and Forsyth Tech has the newest one—it’s only three years old. To raise awareness of the program, Herb wanted to add videos the students had produced to the program’s page on the Forsyth Tech website. Art Bloom, president of Forsyth Tech’s marketing partner, The Bloom Agency, took Herb’s idea and expanded on it. He asked Herb if the DEA students could produce a video specifically for the website—a video to introduce people to Forsyth Tech in a fun and engaging way.

Shot of DEA students Adonna Irwin, John Flinchum, Catherine Kepins, and Suzie Keifer preparing storyboards.

VO: A script was written by The Bloom Agency, and a class of 10 DEA students took two weeks to prepare concepts.

Close-up of animated clock spinning wildly.

Shot of DEA students Nelson Ricardo, Doug Randolph, and John Platt, who developed a distinctive type style that was used in the final video.

VO: The class was divided into three teams, and each had their own unique take on the script.

Animated pie chart divided into three pieces. The pieces each sprout legs and run in separate directions.

Shot of DEA students Chris May, Terrance Duncan Jr., and Charlie Boger working on their storyboards on the way to the presentation.

VO: The students worked on their ideas right up to the last moment to get them ready for the big presentation.

SFX: Music plays “Ta da!” as animated curtain rises.

Shot of Terrance and Charlie presenting their idea.

VO: On June 10, the students presented their concepts to The Bloom Agency. Art Bloom was impressed with their ideas as well as their presentation skills.

Cut to Art speaking to the camera.

ART: “The way they presented to us was just terrific. We were just blown away.”

Shot of Terrance at work editing the video.

VO: Completing the video took over 500 working hours, much of it outside the students’ normal class time. But they all felt the sacrifice was worthwhile, as did their instructor, John Kelly.

Fade to John Kelly speaking to the camera.

JOHN: This is the best experience they can have. What they will learn doing this project will stick with them. It carries with it lessons of how to interact with a client and how to prepare for and how to finish the work.

 VO: The finished video was presented to Forsyth Tech’s staff and faculty on August 19 at convocation and earned a standing ovation. That’s pretty amazing for a project that was completed in six weeks by a class of just 10 students. To see the finished product, go to www.ForsythTech.edu. We think you’ll be impressed.

SFX: Applause and cheers

to be continued...
In Focus

A Shady Past. If the enormous Japanese Zelkova tree located in front of the Tech Building on Forsyth Tech’s Main Campus could speak, what a story it could tell! Not only has this tree served as a silent and stately witness to the college's growth over the past 50 years, this particular tree has been recognized as the oldest living variety of its kind in North Carolina. But, because Zelkovas are not indigenous to this area, the state's Division of Forest Resources is unable to officially assign it an historical designation.