COMMUNITY

THE MAGAZINE OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Volume 11, Issue 1

INTO THE LAB, OUT TO THE WORLD:

Hermsen finds 'second home'at MCC Prototype Design Lab, making glasses more affordable and inclusive

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METROPOLITAN
Community College

Volume 11, Issue 1

Community is a quarterly publication of Metropolitan Community College. Contact the editor at **531-MCC-2726 or efrazier@mccneb.edu.**

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A LETTER FROM THE MCC FOUNDATION

As we approach the end of another remarkable year, I am filled with gratitude and excitement for all we've achieved together. The unwavering support from individuals like you has played a pivotal role in shaping the success of Metropolitan Community College.

Reflecting on all the milestones we've accomplished, this year we celebrate 50 years as a community college. On March 9, 2024, we will gather to commemorate five decades of academic excellence, community engagement and service. We hope you will join in the celebration at the MCC 50th Anniversary Gala.

This anniversary is not just a marker of time; it is a celebration of the stories, achievements and aspirations of the students, faculty, staff and supporters who have contributed to our shared journey. It is a testament to the transformative power of education and the strength of our community bonds.

As we look back with pride, let us also look forward with anticipation. The 50th Anniversary Gala will be a moment to honor our rich history and to envision an even brighter future for MCC. For more information on the 50th Anniversary Gala, contact the MCC Foundation at 531-MCC-2346.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for your ongoing support. Your commitment to the mission of MCC has been instrumental in our success, and I am confident that together, we will continue building a legacy that inspires generations to come.

Wishing you a joyful holiday season and looking forward to celebrating this significant milestone with you in March.

Sincerely,

Amy

Amy Recker
Associate vice president for Advancement
Executive director, MCC Foundation

Metropolitan Community College
FOUNDATION

INTO THE LAB, OUT TO THE WORLD:

Hermsen finds 'second home' at MCC Prototype Design Lab, making glasses more affordable and inclusive

When the arm on his glasses broke mid-project in the mountains of Colorado in 2004, James Hermsen went into MacGuyver mode. Like the beloved nuts-and-bolts TV hero, Hermsen surveyed the objects around him and started grabbing what was usable. A power drill, bit and a spool of neon yellow line from a weedwhacker would have to do the trick.

Drilling holes where the arms of his broken glasses connected to the frames around the lenses, he fed the repurposed line through and fastened it. He tried them on and adjusted them until they fit properly. Hermsen finished out the workday not knowing he had just stepped into the next chapter of his life.

Hermsen, 58, is now a local entrepreneur and inventor who specializes in designing and producing adaptive eyewear products. He's been a mainstay at the Metropolitan Community College Prototype Design Lab since it opened to the public in 2017, where he modifies and tests his designs for three specialty eyewear products.

One benefits people with rare craniofacial anomalies, and the others make glasses more affordable and serve health care professionals.

The Omaha Westside graduate credits the training and access provided at the Prototype Design Lab with leading to design breakthroughs and significant production time and cost savings. This access was made possible through the Fort Omaha Campus capital expansion.

Being a jack of all trades has allowed Hermsen to live "free range" — mixing business and personal interests, like cycling, entrepreneurship and world travel, while earning a comfortable living.

Before finding his purpose and his "second home" at the lab, Hermsen was never really interested in working in a specific career, but he was always motivated to live a particular kind of life. In addition to construction, his work history includes working as a fine dining server, mortgage broker, bicycle retail/repair, transportation and sales.

His varied experience helped him develop the office skills to manage a company, the sales skills to market his products, the technical skills to develop them and the people skills to succeed.

Like the weedwhacker line, seemingly unrelated parts have a way of finding their way into his designs. Components from guitar strings adorned the arms of the bright, red-framed glasses he wore as he worked on a small production run in the Prototype Design Lab in March. Parts of a bicycle spoke are fitted into the design of his ergonomic loupe strap product. The loupe strap is secured to surgical glasses, keeping dental hygienists, dentists and doctors' magnifying focal lenses steady while they look down at their patients in the chair or on the operating table.

"The commercial side of construction is where you have to think things through and do a lot of problem-solving. That's where I learned the most skills for this," Hermsen said of his inclination for invention. "[My prototype designs use] an amalgamation of different parts and pieces. By having a diverse background, I was able to apply it to creating these [different eyewear products]."

Tinkering. Adjusting. Testing. Trying again (and again, many times more). Sometimes failing. Sometimes succeeding. Always learning. This is what prototyping is all about. The Center for Advanced and Emerging Technology (Building 24) on the Fort Omaha Campus is a special place that provides creators like Hermsen access to the expensive tools, equipment and training to turn concepts into completed projects.

Anyone with a membership can bring their ideas and designs to the 9,600-square-foot facility that houses a wide variety of fabrication equipment, including a fully stocked wood and metal shop.

After taking a required safety class, members have full access to available technology, including 3D printers and scanners; laser, vinyl and plasma cutters; CNC routers; milling, painting and finishing machines; and soldering and welding equipment. MCC staff assists with all aspects of projects, including design, file and equipment operation, as well as using the software that supports it.

Monthly membership rates are $25, plus the cost of materials. MCC students have free]access. The College also offers a two-year Associate of Applied Science in Prototype Design.

Hermsen and Donny Suh have made mofications to their glasses designs that serve people with craniofacial anomalies. The above child has microtia, and the adjustable head strap on the child pictured at top right helps secure the glasses to his head while keeping the frames level on the bridge of the nose. The child pictured in the bottom images has an enlarged forehead and a large pupil distance. The adjustable nasal bridge modification provides the appropriate spacing distance between the lenses. Both designs at right illustrate Hermsen's aesthetic touch.

A POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP

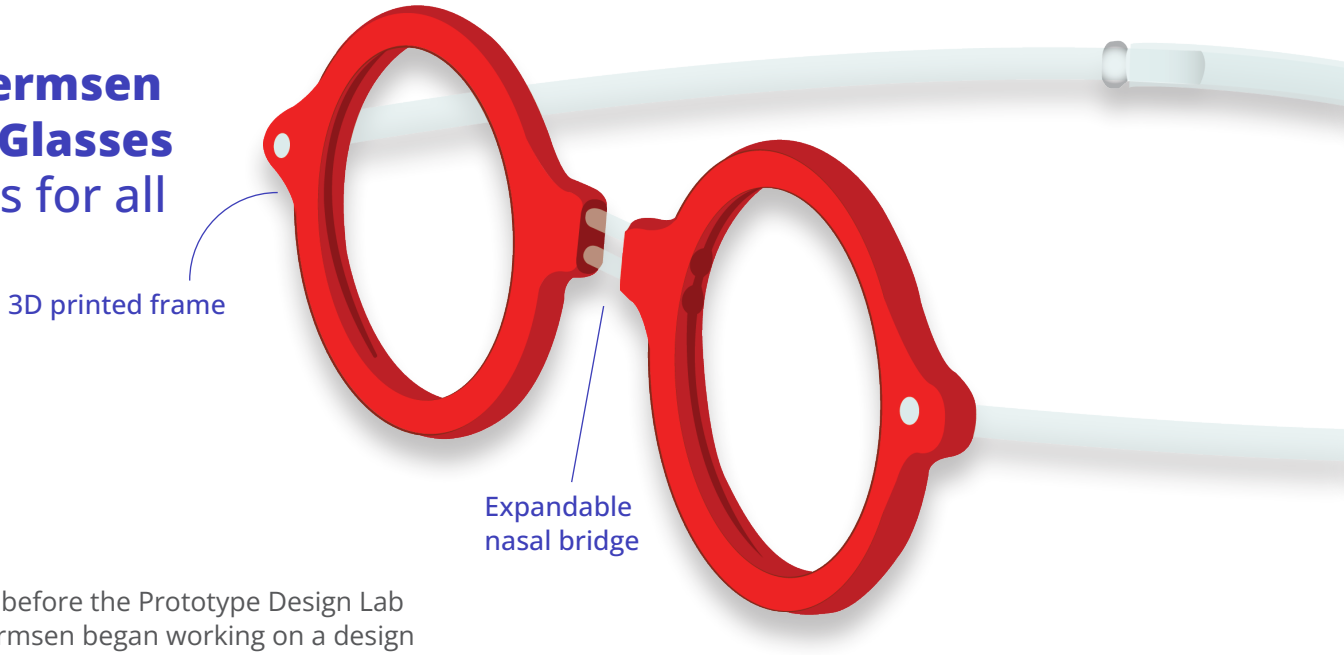
Hermsen has been developing adaptive eyewear since 2006, when he secured a patent for sunglasses he created for people with an active lifestyle. He launched the startup, Spokiz (pronounced spoke eyes), to sell them. The design was inspired by the modification made to his own glasses two years prior.

Hermsen loved the simplicity of the solution and knew it had potential beyond the kayaking world, where his sunglasses first gained traction. In the years that followed, which included moving back to Omaha, he identified more uses for his patent to reach a broader audience — while still growing the Spokiz brand, selling the sunglasses to outdoor gear shops and sponsoring kayak races abroad.

Once he began developing eyewear for kids, relationships with the local optical community followed, including the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Children's Hospital & Medical Center. In 2012, he also became acquainted with Melissa Tumblin, founder of the Ear Community. The small, Colorado-based nonprofit serves children with a rare condition called microtia, in which they are born either without an ear or with an underdeveloped one, making finding a pair of glasses that fit properly nearly impossible.

Suh Hermsen OMNI Glasses

Glasses for all



A few years before the Prototype Design Lab opened, Hermsen began working on a design that would serve microtia patients. Donny Suh (pronounced saw), the renowned pediatric ophthalmologist he would meet three years later, had created a separate design for microtia glasses in 2000, driven by his passion for innovation to help his patients.

"One of the things that really bothered me during the early course of my career was that whenever I saw kids with ear malformation, they would always walk around with glasses that did not fit properly. It broke my heart," Suh said.

Suh said his original microtia glasses prototype design, made of nonrigid elastic material that could be stretched to secure over the top of the head, was difficult to use. Hersmen's design, modeled from his Spokiz glasses, used a stronger but lightweight, adjustable monofilament strap that went behind the head. The right prototype for microtia patients was a blend of both models.

Hermsen presented Suh with the merged prototype shortly after their first meeting at Children's Hospital & Medical Center.

The adjustable material from Hermsen's design would replace the elastic material used in the overhead strap concept from Suh's design. Keeping the behind-the-head strap from Hermsen's original prototype gave the added flexibility and security needed. Suh immediately recognized that the new design would work for his patients.

A strong partnership emerged that paired Suh's medical knowledge with Hermsen's creativity and their shared passion for invention. They began making adaptive eyewear products under the limited-liability company, Suh Hermsen Strap.

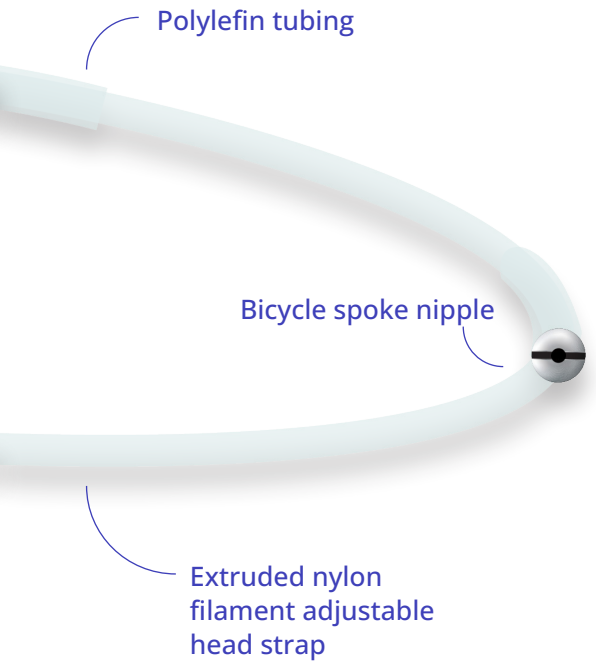
They have collaborated on two additional products since they began working together in 2015. Their ergonomic loupe strap for surgical glasses is a commercial product. Their OMNI glasses are an open-source, 3D printable glasses design, which makes them more accessible and affordable.

Suh, now chief of Pediatric Ophthalmology for the University of California, Irvine, said poor vision is too significant of a problem to go untreated in children, but some don't receive the care they need because of the financial constraints their families face.

"Vision contributes to 75 percent of a child's development. It helps them learn in school, play sports and improve their social interactions. I saw many patients who were falling behind. Early intervention is extremely critical and has the greatest return on investment to society," Suh said.

Hermsen said working with Suh stretched his imagination for his designs beyond what would have been possible on his own. Suh said in addition to seeing Hermsen's ability to innovate, he could tell he was the right kind of person to work with.

"Don't get me wrong, James is an entrepreneur, but I could tell he had a good heart. Working with people with similar values was extremely important to me," Suh said. "We were able to help children with microtia with these specialty glasses, and then the microtia community contacted us for help."



"We've redesigned the OMNI glasses countless times, and that can be where the Prototype Design Lab makes a huge difference. You can make a design change and print the prototype all in the same day," Hermsen said. "You can also do production runs here at lower quantities and still do enough to have value. This is state of the art and all I really need."

'HE ALWAYS HAS A TABLE'

Tumblin, the founder of the Ear Community, which creates awareness and connects families affected by microtia to resources and services, said when her daughter Ally was born with the condition, it was a mystery to her.

"When my daughter was born without an ear, I honestly didn't know that was something that happened," Tumblin said. "We're a super small, underserved community. Most people haven't heard of what our families are dealing with."

Hermsen has been coming to Ear Community 's annual picnics, providing free glasses to children with microtia for nearly a decade.

"He's been able to help kids see and even accommodated some of the kids in our community to fit hearing devices into his designs, and he's never asked for any money," Tumblin said. "He's always been a part of our events. I tell him, 'You always have a table. Come and do what you do because it's needed.'"

Tumblin said children who are affected by microtia have needs that go beyond the developmental. It's also about fitting in. Both the microtia glasses and OMNI glasses feature colorful frames. The OMNI glasses have an adjustable nose bridge, which makes them work for individuals with any pupil distance. The round lenses, while fashionable, are also functional. They can be rotated to correct for astigmatism.

Both designs send the message, "Look at me!" to a world that sometimes looks away or stares too long.

"Children in our community often don't have another child like them in the classroom. They've never seen someone like themselves. Many doctors don't have a patient like our daughter in their practice," Tumblin said. "James has helped so many families in our community and put smiles on so many of our kids' faces. He's so creative."

What strikes Tumblin about Hermsen is that unlike her and Suh, he doesn't have a personal connection to microtia.

"He doesn't have a child or sibling who is affected by this. He just fell in love with our community," Tumblin said.

WHERE CREATIVITY AND TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE MEET

Hermsen and Suh's ability to invent predated the Prototype Design Lab, as did their desire to use their knowledge to benefit others. The Prototype Design Lab simply provided a place with the access, tools and available support to put their ideas to the test and make them possible to scale.

Before Hermsen had access to the Prototype Design Lab, the parts had to be hand soldered together. A mold to manufacture the frames in the U.S. would cost around $20,000. It was also impractical for a small company to manufacture a niche product in mass quantities. The design iterations needed to be tested before printing thousands at a time.

The training available is also a valuable piece. All members of the Prototype Design Lab take a class to learn how to use the equipment safely. They also have access to staff to assist with projects, from concept to completion.

"This wouldn't have been possible without MCC. We reached out to many organizations, and MCC was the one that came through and supported us, not only with emerging technology, but also with the tech support and training — James got all of that at MCC, and we are so very grateful," Suh said.

Ken Heinze, MCC Prototype Design Lab coordinator, said playing even a small part on "a project that might be helping someone is enormously gratifying."

Heinze said all ideas are welcome at the Prototype Design Lab, from designing a set for a podcast to a giant merry-go-round for a game show.

"This is a place where everybody is welcome, where we can find a way to help move a project forward, no matter what it is. If you have an idea, we'd love to talk to you because we have a machine here that's going to completely change your outlook on your project," Heinze said.

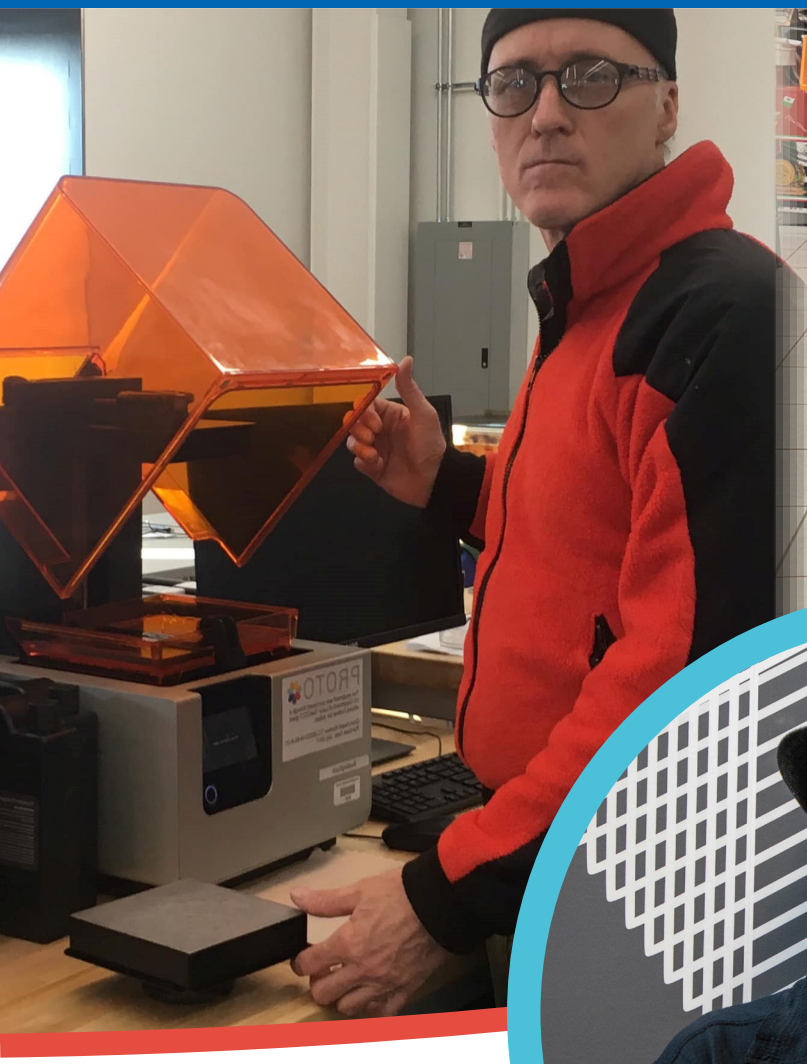
Chances are your project can also change someone's outlook on life.

A NEW OUTLOOK

In August, Hermsen had just returned from his first mission trip with Suh to Ensenada, Mexico, joining a group of volunteers with Rotary Club International's Newport Beach and Ensenada chapters, as well as medical students from University of California, Irvine. With donated lenses, hundreds of children and adult patients were fitted with OMNI glasses for free.

"The beauty about the OMNI glasses is not only that they're versatile, adjustable and cost-effective, but we are able to make them in about 10 minutes, so on a mission trip like that, you're really seeing the finished work in the time that you're there," Suh said. "They are inspiring young medical students in public health. They saw how ideas and innovation can make a significant impact in the lives of people."

Since beginning making glasses for children with microtia, Hermsen has received countless texts, emails and video messages thanking him. Being in the field, participating in the fitting process and seeing children and families expressing joy and gratitude after receiving the OMNI glasses strengthened his commitment to the work.



"It's become my purpose, my focus and how I like to spend my time. I don't do a lot of the things I used to because I'd rather be doing something more beneficial. If I were just doing it for the money, I wouldn't get to see a lot of these children and experience the direct connection with the family," Hermsen said.

As Hermsen and Suh's adaptive eyewear products continue to reach the people who need them, new opportunities are unfolding. A project serving people in Cambodia is in the works, and efforts to grow the usage of their adaptive eyewear products with local health and human services nonprofit organizations are also happening.

"My goal is to take this experience, bring it home and plug it into underserved communities in Omaha. I'm getting closer to being able to launch this in my backyard," Hermsen said.

Do you have an idea to explore? Visit mccneb.edu/PrototypeDesignLab for more information and membership options at the Prototype Design Lab.

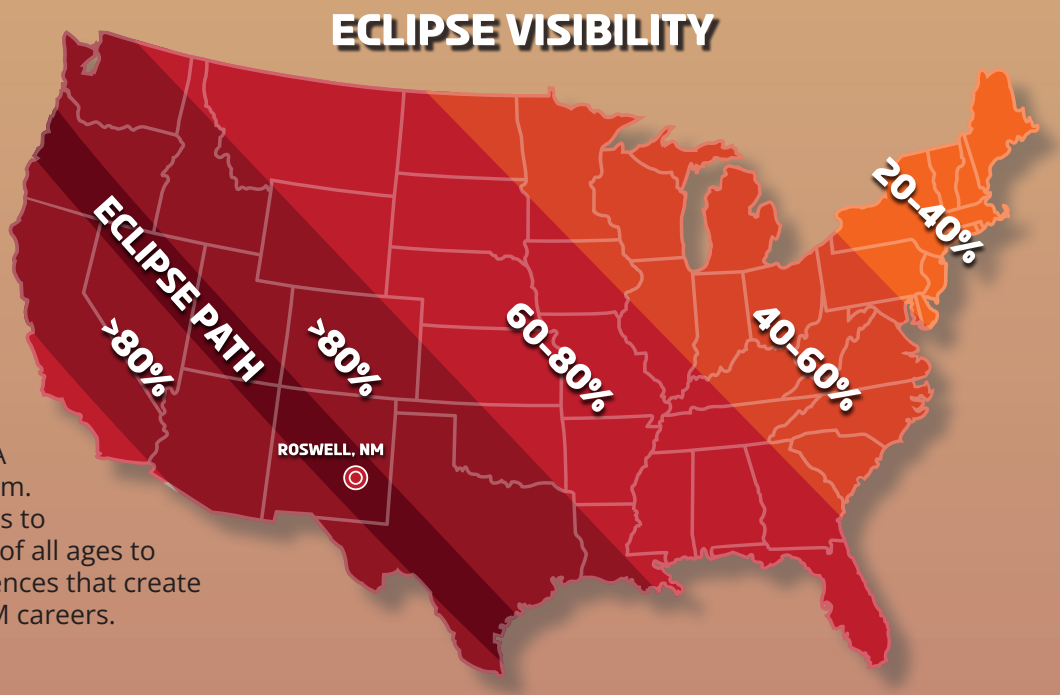
Learn more about adaptive eyewear products at suhhermsen.com.

HIGHER LEARNING

MCC students launch high-altitude balloon into ‘near space’ during annular eclipse as part of NASA-funded STEM learning and research project.

Visitors to Roswell, New Mexico, are typically more focused on what comes down from outer space. Recently, a group of Nebraska students traveled to the nation’s hub for alien-inspired tourism to send a weather balloon more than 81,100 feet up. Through a grant facilitated by Metropolitan Community College and funded by NASA, 10 students from MCC, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the University of Nebraska Omaha launched a high-altitude balloon while standing in the “cosmic bull’s eye” of the Oct. 14 annular eclipse.

As participants in the Nationwide Eclipse Ballooning Project, the teams will study the data collected from the payloads the balloons carried along the path of the eclipse and apply key learnings from the experiment at a follow-up launch during a total eclipse in April 2024. NEBP is primarily funded through the NASA Science Activation program. The goal of the program is to connect diverse learners of all ages to authentic science experiences that create learner pathways to STEM careers.



Nebraska students were among participants from more than 80 high schools, community colleges, tribal schools, historically Black colleges and four-year universities represented. MCC physics instructor Kendra Sibbernsen, Ph.D., led the project and was one of four faculty mentors, which included Derrick Nero, Ed.D., assistant professor of Engineering Education at UNO; Karen Stelling, a professor in the College of Engineering at UNL; and her husband Michael Sibbernsen, director of education at the Branched Oak Observatory.

The Sibbernsens have participated in 85 educational high-altitude balloon launches since 2011. Kendra said she wanted to pursue the project at MCC because of the unique opportunity it would provide for students to participate in a national research project.

"It's not every day that students can be part of a successful NASA mission. It's a wonderful opportunity for Nebraska students to contribute to such a large project and be able to share their experiences and data with teams from across the nation," Sibbernsen said.

Sibbernsen said it was also a good opportunity for Nebraska educational institutions to collaborate on an interdisciplinary project. Participating schools chose one of two tracks of study — atmospheric science or engineering.

The Nebraska team was focused on the engineering aspects of the project, launching one balloon during each eclipse and floating their payloads, which include live streaming cameras to capture content. The balloon climbed to a peak altitude of 81,132 feet and traveled 138 miles from the launch site before being retrieved on public land using tracking equipment.

Students used 3D printers to produce some of the components for the flight. The equipment had to be able to operate at altitude and withstand impact from falling to the ground tethered to a parachute. From the ground, students sent signals to a satellite that could communicate with their balloon at altitude and relay commands to an on-board receiver for in-flight operations. Commands included one to open and close an air vent in the neck of the balloon to manipulate its altitude and another to trigger an electronic process to release the payloads from the balloon.

“High-altitude balloons are stepping stones into aerospace engineering, and doing experiments with them is much more affordable than testing rockets. And when we do projects like these with students during an eclipse, we can get some amazing pictures and build on their excitement,” Sibbernsen said.

Sibbernsen said every balloon launch is different, each one building on the one before it. She said the Roswell launch was successful because all of its camera, tracking and venting systems were functional while in the air and they were able to live-stream video, but the cut-down process failed at high altitude after succeeding during a tethered practice launch at 80 feet. Using the venting system to lower the balloon nearly doubled the mileage from the anticipated landing distance.

“It’s true experimental science, and we’ll add this one to our collective history,” Sibbernsen said. “I told the team how proud I was of what they had accomplished up to this point. There was a year of buildup and a lot of adrenaline for a short period of time to study the annular eclipse. We can take a little break now, then we’ll start talking about what we can do better and start preparing for the total eclipse.”

Visit mccneb.org/AnnularEclipse for more information, photos and videos of Nebraska students participating in the Nationwide Eclipse Ballooning Project.

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METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

50th Anniversary Gala

AN EVENING CELEBRATING OUR PAST AND INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE.

MARCH 9, 2024

For more information, contact the MCC Foundation at foundation@mccneb.edu or 531-MCC-2346.

Visit onecau.se/mcc50 to purchase tickets, donate or participate in the silent auction.

FACES of MCC

STEPHENIE CONLEY

I chose to attend MCC because I was a nontraditional student. After serving in the Air Force, I wanted to use my G.I. Bill. I felt like Metropolitan Community College would provide me with what I needed to be successful in college. I liked that MCC courses would transfer to the University of Nebraska Omaha, where I wanted to get my bachelor's degree.

After graduating from MCC, I transferred to UNO, where I majored in Secondary Education with minors in English and Mass Communication. MCC helped make sure I was prepared to succeed at a four-year institution. Because of the strong foundation I received at MCC, I graduated from UNO summa cum laude and began my dream career the next school year as a high school teacher.

One of my all-time favorite instructors was professor Janice Vierk. I had her for English, and she not only helped me learn the course, but she also influenced me to further my education and pursue my ultimate goal of becoming a teacher. She gave amazing advice and made learning fun with her sense of humor and kindness.

I began teaching at Bellevue East High School in the 2008-09 school year. I received my master's in Curriculum and Instruction from Doane University in 2014 and have taken an additional 36 semester hours in teacher education courses through Augustana University. I currently teach journalistic writing, video journalism, photography and graphic design, yearbook production and newspaper production. I am also nationally certified as a Master Journalism Educator by the Journalism Education Association. I'm currently in my 16th year of teaching for Bellevue Public Schools and am also the Communicative Arts/Art department chair.

KAT PARENT

I attended Metropolitan Community College because it allowed me to work full time and take classes that worked with my schedule. I wanted to pursue a degree in Counseling, and I was able to take advantage of the Chemical Dependency Counseling program.

Attending MCC and obtaining a degree was an important life goal for me to accomplish. This emboldened me to achieve yet another life goal, which was to publish a book in 2022. The confidence and structure I gained from attending MCC allowed me to keep my book in sight and to establish the steps required to publish. I now have a book I am proud of that takes my breast cancer experience and uses it to encourage other cancer survivors. The name of my book is “Oh, The Mammaries!,” available on Amazon.

Even though I already graduated with my degree in General Studies with a certificate in Chemical Dependency Counseling, I recently returned to MCC to complete my practicum in this field. I am currently interning at Northpoint Nebraska and enjoying my training there. I am also in the process of writing my second book, due to be published by the end of 2023.

“Bon appétit!”

MCC Culinary and Hospitality program puts Julia Child-inspired education on display

A unique sponsorship with The Durham Museum provides immersive fine dining, catering and baking experiences for MCC Culinary and Hospitality students and Sage Student Bistro diners until Feb. 2024.

There are nearly 250 million photos of culinary masterpieces you can find by searching "#foodie" on Instagram. The inventive chefs, influencers and at-home cooks who make and plate them would have never found the massive following they have on social media if Julia Child hadn't first gone on WGBH-TV, a public access station in Boston, to promote the legendary cookbook she co-authored, "Mastering the Art of French Cooking" in 1961.

A new generation of culinary students at MCC may not be familiar with Child as they registered for classes, but through a special learning opportunity over the next several months, they will have direct exposure to her work and an understanding of how it shaped American food culture. MCC is a supporting partner of a traveling exhibit at The Durham Museum titled, "Julia Child: A Recipe for Life," which opened in October and runs through Feb. 11, 2024. The exhibit is produced and managed by Flying Fish, developed in collaboration with the Napa Valley Museum under rights granted by The Julia Child Foundation for Gastronomy and the Culinary Arts and The Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute and Harvard University, and is generously supported by Oceania Cruises.

The exhibition explores America's culinary revolution through a series of immersive experiences. It features an interactive replica of Child's kitchen from the set of "The French Chef," where patrons can operate a vintage video camera, mix "ingredients" and have sensory experiences that bring the sounds and smells of Child's kitchen to the exhibition gallery. It also

highlights people from Omaha's history who have impacted others through their love of food.

When Child's distinctive voice first entered living rooms across the country, households weren't putting a premium on dinner — advertisers were pushing frozen TV dinners during commercials and oddly concocted, molded Jell-O salads were having a moment. She bucked that trend by teaching the benefits of what MCC Culinary Arts instructor James Davis calls "the long game" in cooking.

Child's philosophy on cooking prioritized enjoyment over convenience, an attitude that didn't go unnoticed. Phone calls from interested viewers wanting more cooking demonstrations came pouring in after her first broadcast, and Child continued to deliver. With food as her forum, she captivated, inspired and entertained audiences for the rest of her life as America's culinary queen and its first rock star chef.

All photos courtesy of the Julia Child Foundation for Gastronomy and Culinary Arts.

"It is evidence of why Julia is a sage and why as educators we see so much value in teaching from her legacy," said Davis, who teaches students how to create a fine dining experience. "Showing students that the best results don't necessarily happen right away is so important. It takes time and work."

Todd Schulkin, executive director for the Julia Child Foundation for Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, said Child discovered great food during her life in Paris with her husband Paul following World War II, learning her craft at the renowned Le Cordon Bleu culinary school. A takeaway from her education was that the French revered good cooking but offered little explanation behind its foundations. Child saw an opportunity to help fill the gap in knowledge with an American audience.

"I think one of her big epiphanies was if I know the why behind these techniques and it helped me, I think it will be helpful to the average person in their kitchen, and more importantly, it will make cooking more accessible and more enjoyable," Schulkin said. "Her approach to recipe writing was to be a little angel on the shoulder of the person tackling it."

During the fall quarter, MCC Culinary and Hospitality students prepared Child-inspired fine dining menus at Sage Student Bistro and catered a special event at The Durham. MCC Community Education will also have programming connections to Child's legacy. In winter quarter, the Open Kitchen Studio at the Institute for the Culinary Arts will take on the feel of Child's legendary TV program, "The French Chef" for pairing studios modeled from past broadcasts.

MCC Culinary Arts baking instructor Cathy Curtis said the programming connections to the exhibit provide a uniquely valuable teaching opportunity for faculty.

"Before Julia's TV life, there really wasn't an easy place to find and understand the key tenets of cookery that we teach our students today, like the smoke point of butter versus oil," Curtis said. "She broadened our palettes in a way that was approachable. She had this commonality about her that I think was appealing to people and made them feel safe to experiment and play, which I think is the best way to learn about food — just get in the kitchen and cook."

Schulkin said Child was more of a natural teacher than an intuitive cook.

"Cooking wasn't something that came easy to her. I think if Julia were still here today and you walked up to her and asked her, she would say she was a cooking teacher, whether through her TV show or

her cookbooks. She never used modern parlance — she never identified as a chef. She felt like chefs were people who worked in restaurants or professional kitchens, which she never did in her life," Schulkin said. "She was a very effective communicator, which is key to being a good teacher. Good teachers have something inherent in their personality, that when they learn something, they get others excited about it, too. They want to share it with other people. Julia fully embodied that."

Besides being inspirational to culinary students, Child also provides an example to the lifelong learner. She is arguably one of the most prominent nontraditional students in history. Child was 36 when she began attending Le Cordon Bleu. Her education was provided as a benefit of her volunteer service as a research assistant for the Office of Strategic Services — the predecessor of the CIA.

Curtis said Child's story of personal growth and breaking through in a male-dominated industry made her a historically important figure, but her authenticity is what propelled her ascent to American icon status. Her early television shows were filmed in one take. Mistakes couldn't be edited out, so disaster recovery efforts and error-driven modifications were part of her lessons.

"She blazed the trail for so many women chefs. Her perseverance is inspirational to me, and I think it will be for our students, too," Curtis said. "She was so genuine in everything she did and that is something we want to highlight. She was comfortable in her own flaws. Starting over and having to find new ways to the path she wanted to go down is a testament to her grit, and she moved through those moments with such humor and grace."

The American Sage project at Sage Student Bistro honored her legacy with select dates for fine dining menus developed from Child-inspired recipes or other American chefs who were strongly influenced by her work. Each one-night-only menu included nine courses — five from the kitchen and four from the bake shop.

On Nov. 2, Sage Student Bistro closed so culinary students could attend and cater a special event at The Durham Museum's "The Joy of Julia" speaker series. The event featured nationally acclaimed pastry chef Gale Gand, a James Beard Award winner and two-time guest on "The French Chef." She shared stories of baking with Child and her lasting impact on the culinary world.

"Just the fact that some of our students are going to get to be in the same room with Gale Gand — she's amazing. This is an incredibly unique experience for our students," Curtis said leading up to the event.

Schulkin said if Child were able to attend the speaker series event, he imagined her focus would be on the MCC culinary students attending.

"Julia would be pleased to know that this kind of exhibit helps inspire and educate people about what's possible in their life, but I don't think she would have been terribly interested in an exhibit about herself. She would be right there asking every student what they're learning, what they want to be and probably telling them to call her if they needed help. And of course, asking questions about what's on the menu at Sage, and what people in Omaha and at the College like to eat," Schulkin said.

Davis said the preparation that goes into creating the featured menus at the bistro and timing a nine-course fine dining experience for 50 to 60 guests gives students a realistic representation of the execution needed to deliver on all aspects of a special event. Participation is limited to second-year culinary students due to the level of preparation and collaboration required.

"Julia would be pleased to know that this kind of exhibit helps inspire and educate people about what's possible in their life."

Davis and Curtis said they tried to strike a balance with their teaching approach between letting the students experiment and providing direction as they prepared their featured menus.

"We asked them not to create a replica recipe but to look at a dish from Julia and find ways to elevate or alter it while still staying true to the meal," Davis said. "When they were previewing their menus, sometimes they missed the mark, but I think they learned a tremendous amount from those moments, especially from experiencing the pressure of what it means to roll out a new menu."

Sage Student Bistro featured menus showcased classic French cuisine with modern twists, including a play on one of Child's best-known recipes, coq au vin, with a take from chef Paul Prudhomme: blackened coq au Riesling. Boeuf Bourguignon was taken up a notch on the Sage table d'hôte menu as beef tenderloin Bourguignon with Yukon puree, root vegetables, mushrooms and chives. Another Child-inspired classic dish, cassoulet, made an appearance on the menu with lamb.

Fall and winter desserts that took inspiration from Child included delicacies like crème brûlée, stone fruit tarte tatin, apple charlotte, chocolate mousse trio and poached pear with fromage blanc (see adjoining recipe to make this treat at home).

"It feels like a very big day to our student chefs, and it should. They worked really hard on their menus and it's intimidating when it is your first time running the show," Davis said. "They had to partner and work together for the diners to experience what they intended, and it's marvelous when you see it all come together."

Schulkin said Child valued culinary programs at community colleges. The Julia Child Foundation for Gastronomy and the Culinary Arts is a supporter of Santa Barbara City College's culinary program, which has the Julia Child Scholarship Fund. In addition to managing everything she donated to the Foundation and preserving her legacy through events and the annual Julia Child Award, its purpose is to award grants to other nonprofits in the culinary space, including scholarships for culinary careers, culinary history research and educational food media and literacy programs.

Schulkin said Child would be impressed with the value MCC is delivering for culinary education. Similar to her goal with French cuisine, providing a nationally recognized program at $68 per credit hour makes the training more approachable.

"Julia's mandate was that the more people who do this, the better. At $68 a credit hour, [MCC is] giving people many more options to choose the path in the culinary world that fits them best without having to worry as much about how they are going to pay off their loans. That flexibility is tremendously valuable to creating diversity in the profession," Schulkin said. "Whether they end up in a professional kitchen, start their own catering business or want to feed their family, relatives, kids, aunts, uncles and grandmas better, that's all for the betterment of human existence."

Learn more about programming connections at mccneb.edu/Bistro or visit mccneb.edu/CE to sign up for Continuing Education Culinary classes.

Go to durhammuseum.org/Current-Exhibits to learn more about the "Julie Child: A Recipe for Life" exhibit.

Spiced Riesling Poached Pears

Inspired by Julia Child
Original recipe source: On Baking, 3rd Edition Updated
Yield: 15

Ingredients

15 each	pears, peeled, stems left intact
40 ounces	water
36 fluid ounces	Riesling wine
44 ounces	granulated sugar
.5 ounce	ground cinnamon
2 teaspoons	ground cardamom
4 tablespoons	lemon zest, finely grated
6 tablespoons	orange zest, finely grated
30 each	mint leaves
1 ½ whole	vanilla beans, split and scraped

Instructions

1. Into a deep stock pot, add water, Riesling, sugar, spices, zests, mint leaves and vanilla beans; heat to a boil.
2. Add peeled pears to solution. Cut a piece of parchment to fit inside of the saucepan (cartouche) and cover.
3. Reduce heat to very low, barely simmering. Allow the pears to poach until fork tender, about 1 to 1.5 hours.
4. Remove the pears from the poaching liquid. Return liquid to a boil and reduce until liquid is slightly thickened to serve as a syrup with the pears, about 40 minutes.
5. Store pears and syrup separately and in airtight containers, under refrigeration, for up to 7 days.

Powersports and Outdoor Power Technology program launched at MCC

Registration open for new associate degree and career certificate program courses

A new associate degree and career certificate program at Metropolitan Community College gives motorcycle, all-terrain/utility-terrain vehicle (ATV and UTV), boating and other powersports and outdoor power equipment enthusiasts the opportunity to parlay their passions into employment. The Powersports and Outdoor Power Technology program launched in fall 2023 at MCC.

The two-year degree encompasses 94 credit hours with instruction and hands-on training to develop powersports technicians to maintain, troubleshoot and repair power equipment technology such as personal watercraft, motorcycles, ATVs, lawn equipment and much more. The program also incorporates four career certificate options that range from 24.5 to 33.5 credit hours — ATV/Snowmobile Technician, Marine Technician, Motorcycle Technician and Outdoor Power Technician.

Terry Kuebler, an MCC instructor who helped design the curriculum of the new program, said it prepares students to perform at the dealership level upon completion, gaining the soft skills to become managers, manufacturer technical service representatives or business owners after establishing themselves in the growing industry.

"Powersports is basically the toy store for all the 'grown up' kids. This is a passion-based industry filled by people who have great love for the products and gravitate to this kind of work," said Kuebler, whose involvement in regional motocross competitions eventually led to a second career that began in 1999. "Hang out at any powersports or marine shop for a while, and you'll notice the enthusiasm of the staff and the clientele. They share a bond with each other that is different from what employees at other jobs may have."

One comprehensive program includes training to service the following:

- ***ATVs***
- ***Commercial lawn and maintenance equipment***
- ***Handheld outdoor power equipment***
- ***Motorcycles***
- ***Outboard motors***
- ***Personal watercraft***
- ***Side-by-sides/UTVs***

With at least 70 employers in the MCC four-county service area and nearby shops in Iowa, Kuebler said students can use the training for careers as service technicians; sales associates; parts attendants; service, parts and sales managers; set-up technicians; maintenance technicians; or a range of other employment opportunities in the powersports industry. Kuebler said the skills taught are also transferable to other technical careers.

"There is a great need for powersports workers of all types. Shops are continuously looking for good employees in all departments," Kuebler said.

The program is housed at the South Omaha Campus, taking place in the Mahoney building. For more information, visit mccneb.edu/Powersports or call 531-MCC-2400.

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