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MCC serves approximately 700 student-veterans. These students often tackle their studies with military precision. But veterans who are transitioning back to civilian life face unique issues. MCC is committed to helping these extraordinary individuals succeed by offering in-house support services and guidance in accessing veteran-specific services within the community.

Iraq War Veteran Finds Future at MCC

East Irondequoit resident Lydia Hernandez works full-time at a packaging and fulfillment company in Greece. She's the single mother of two, seven-year-old Kaitlyn and three-year-old Joshua. "Two beautiful children," she says. She is also an MCC student on track to earn her liberal arts degree in May. For the past 11 years, Lydia, an Iraq War veteran, has served in security forces for the New York National Guard. She signed on during her senior year of high school—just a few years after her own mom re-enlisted.



Photo: Matt Witmeyer '00

According to Lydia, the military has taught her a lot. "I'm grateful to have experienced a whole different level of discipline and responsibility. It's a significant life skill that has helped me tremendously in handling the demands of everyday life."

Lydia is equally grateful for MCC's Veteran Services Office. "Tackling college was terrifying for me," she says. "I didn't think I could do it. But the counselors and the approachable atmosphere helped me believe in myself and made me realize that the real world training I needed was college."

After completing her degree in May, Lydia plans to continue her MCC education and complete her prerequisites for nursing. "MCC has made it possible for me to pursue my dreams online and in the evening—it's the only way I could do all that I do," she says.

While MCC and the Veteran Services Office have played a significant role in helping Lydia move forward, it's her kids who keep her grounded. "They're my motivation to prove that with hard work and dedication you can go as far as you want. They're my world. I want to be the best kind of example for them."

Richard Barton Memorial Scholarship Fund

In 2012, Richard Barton, president of C.O.P Security and vice president of the Rochester Regional Veterans Business Council, died at the age of 53. An Air Force veteran, Burton was also a retired Gates police officer. A scholarship in his name, funded by the Monroe Community College Foundation, provides an annual stipend to one MCC student, who has been honorably discharged from military service and is seeking a criminal justice career.

The Richard Barton Memorial Scholarship honors the contribution Burton made to his community and the dedication he exhibited in his profession, while seeking to support veterans interested in pursuing a career in law and criminal justice.

Nearly 65 percent of MCC students depend on financial aid in the form of scholarships, grants or loans. Anyone wishing to contribute to the scholarship fund can contact the Monroe Community College Foundation at: (585) 262-1500.

MCC has received the following veteran-friendly designations that acknowledge the college's dedication to our student-veteran population:

- Military Times:**
Best for Vets
- Military Advanced Education:**
Guide to Military-Friendly Colleges & Universities
- GI Jobs:**
List of Military-Friendly Schools

MCC Employees/Students Welcome Home the Heroes

On October 23, 2016, more than 30 MCC students, employees and family members joined the throng of well-wishers that welcomed home area veterans returning from Washington, DC on Honor Flight Mission #51. Among those in attendance were members of MCC's Supporting Transitioning and Returning Service members (STARS) committee and members of the swim/dive team who participate in several community service events each season.

According to STARS co-chair and chemistry/geosciences faculty member Jessica Barone, "Besides seeing the appreciation in the eyes of the veterans, the most rewarding part was seeing the emotional reactions of our students—and the children of MCC employees. They cheered, clapped, shed a few tears, shook



hands with, and thanked many of the veterans as they walked past us."

The STARS Program informs and educates MCC employees of methods to successfully support, communicate with, and understand our military veterans. "The MCC group attending the Honor Flight return was an extension of our support, understanding and appreciation of our military veteran community," Barone said.

New Tool Supports MCC Student-Veterans

MCC's Veteran Services Office recently began using the Starfish system to track the academic progress of student-veterans. An early alert system, Starfish enables the office to check a student's progress early in the semester. This allows counselors to reach out and educate students about free tutoring, personal counseling, and



other resources that can positively impact their academic experience. The Starfish system is being used to support student-veterans in their critical first year and beyond.

MCC Students to Benefit from 2016 Simpson Cup

On a brisk September weekend, two teams of 13 injured servicemen and veterans from Great Britain and the U.S. competed in the Simpson Cup, a Ryder Cup-style tournament at Rochester's Oak Hill Country Club. The purpose: to raise funds and awareness for the On Course Foundation, a charitable organization that helps men and women injured in the line of duty to rebuild their lives.

A memorable week and a hard-fought contest resulted in a 12 to 6 win for Team USA. MCC's Veteran Services Office is among 10 local veterans' organizations to receive a portion of the tournament proceeds.

MCC Program Partners with CompeerCORPS

No one understands a veteran like someone who's been there. In collaboration with CompeerCORPS and Monroe County, MCC is participating in the PFC Dwyer Program to help ensure our veteran-students transition successfully into civilian life.

Named in memory of Private First Class Joseph P. Dwyer, the program pairs students, faculty and staff volunteers who are veterans with veteran-students who can benefit from the support and encouragement of a one-on-one friendship.

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