

April 29, 2011

SCHOLARSHIP RECOGNITION LUNCHEON/ ROCKVILLE THEATRE ARTS ARENA
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Donors Change Lives

A Speech by
Montgomery College President
Dr. DeRionne Pollard

Dr. Pollard speaks to donors and scholarship recipients at the annual Scholarship Recognition Luncheon.

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Thank you Gigi.

And thank you to everyone for consistently being here for us at Montgomery College. You help make it possible for the College to transform lives. Without our donors, we would reach only a fraction of students. So thank you.

I want to especially thank you for being here *today*. I know I have some stiff competition. I hear there is some wedding going on today? I know I cannot compete with the royal wedding of the decade, but I do feel as if the men and women in this room are part of Montgomery College's royalty. It is our students and our community partners who represent the heart of this institution.

Let me say a special thank you to the members of our Board of Trustees who joined us today. Thank you for

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tirelessly giving of your own time and financial resources to support scholarships to make Montgomery College the most relevant community college in the country. I can never say it enough: thank you.

Our College represents a different opportunity for each and every student who steps onto our campuses. To a student like Sheree Smith, we are a place where the mother of a two-year-old—who fell in love with sonography when she was pregnant with her child—can pursue a career in health sciences. To a student like Alan Antonacci (An-ton-achee), we are a place where a retired mailman of 30 years can reinvent himself. To a student like Rebecca Pleitez (Play – Tez), we are a place where a woman can learn how to teach

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English to elementary school children because she, too, grew up with English as her second language.

We are also the place where students, like Mehadi Khan (Meh - Hadee CON) and Jennifer Fritz, can become the first in their families to go to college. We are the community's college. We are Montgomery College.

What do all these stories have in common? Certainly, they are inspirational students with a desire to better their lives and the community around them. But look a little closer. Dig a little deeper.

Sheree, Alan, Rebecca, Mehadi, and Jennifer may not have been able to pursue their dreams had it not been for YOU. These students are at Montgomery College – and here today – thanks to YOUR generosity.

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But they are the lucky ones. As you will hear over and over today, more than 26-hundred students did not enroll at Montgomery College last fall after qualifying for—but failing to receive—financial aid.

Why, you might ask? Well, quite simply, there were not enough scholarships to go around. Think about it: Montgomery College had 2-thousand, 6-hundred, and 75 students who wanted to receive an education but could not because of money. That is the same as turning away every student from Montgomery Blair High School.

Every donor – every dollar – makes a difference. So thank you again to each and every one of you. Your help is especially crucial in today’s climate where county and state budgets are constricting, where the College is facing a multi-

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million dollar gap in funding and where our students have to cut out life's necessities. So, I am going to urge you to continue reaching a little deeper so that 2,675 does not climb any higher...but, rather, approaches zero.

I want you to think about where you would be without a little bit of help along the way—whether financial assistance from your parents or from a stranger. I encourage you to continue to pay that help forward. Every student success story I will ever share with you—including my own—includes a powerful mentor. You are that mentor to our students. You change lives.

For us, the need is not a world away...it is right in our backyard. The need is right in this room. And the need is great. So thank you for meeting needs in the past and thank

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you, in advance, for the continued need I know you will meet.

Today, I am pleased to announce one gift that truly is paying it forward to hundreds of students. The College received a very generous donation of \$750,000 from the Gordon and Marilyn Macklin Foundation, established by Gordon Macklin, the late founder of NASDAQ. As a former Bethesda resident and Montgomery College foundation board member, Mr. Macklin saw firsthand how Montgomery College transforms lives. He was—and continues to be—a source of inspiration to the business students in the Macklin Business Institute, the honors program named in his honor.

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Mr. Macklin also knew how the cumulative effect of donations, no matter how small individually, transforms lives. He once said, quote “When you drop a pebble in the water, a dozen ripples are created from that one small action. The pebble is gone but the ripples keep repeating, and spreading to create more. If this one pebble can do all that; imagine what could happen if we all drop a pebble. There’s no telling what we can do.” In honor of that perfect quote, you will notice there are lucky pebbles on each of the tables. I invite each of our donors to hand the scholarship recipients at your table a lucky pebble. I encourage our students to keep it in your pocket as a reminder of how generosity has made a difference in your life.

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Students tell us every day how Montgomery College opened the door to their future, despite facing seemingly insurmountable challenges. To a student, a degree means higher earning potential and more job options. To the community, every degree awarded means a more skilled workforce, lower unemployment, and a decreased need for government assistance. Working hand-in-hand with individuals, organizations, and businesses is the only way Montgomery College can continue to transform the lives of our students and the future of our community.

AFCEA – Bethesda is one of our partners devoted to helping Montgomery College make a difference. Recently, AFCEA made a four-year, 120-thousand dollar gift — as well as past generous gifts. We are grateful for AFCEA’s

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leadership, both for its dedication to the College and its place in the forefront of engineering and computer science. It is only appropriate that we plan to name the Physics, Engineering and Geosciences Office Suite in the new Rockville Campus Science Center in AFCEA Bethesda's honor.

It is my pleasure to introduce a strong advocate for the College, Michael Priddy, vice president of education for AFCEA.