

Maybe You're a Graduate But Don't Even Know It

Most of you, our esteemed alumni, are receiving this newsletter as Union County College graduates. Some of you earned your sheepskin decades ago—back when the degree was literally produced on sheepskin. More recent graduates had to settle for fancy-paper degrees.

Hundreds of other people, though, attended Union and earned enough credits to graduate but never got around to filling out the piece of paper to make it official. In other words, they completed the courses they needed for an associate degree or certificate but never closed the deal by actually applying for graduation.

Some, too, are Union County College graduates but they don't even know it.

For what may be an extreme example of the latter phenomenon, meet Alan Pitts. He took his first class at Union in 1975. He completed more than 60 hours of credit course work and then



Alan Pitts filling out free application form to graduate, 35 years after he took his last class at Union.

answered a call to duty to join the U.S. Army in 1979.

His thought at the time was that he would return to Union after his military tour ended and then complete his degree.

Alan served his country with distinction. Soon after returning to civilian life, life got in the way of his finishing college. He got married, began having children, and joined the police force in his hometown of Rahway. After 16 years of service as a police officer, he retired in 2002.

As a retiree, Alan dabbles in real estate and serves the community as a volunteer soccer coach.

Then one day Alan happened to meet one of his former Criminal Justice professors who is still teaching at Union County College. Professor Mark Singer told him, "You should really go back and finish your associate degree and maybe even go on for a bachelor's degree."

Alan considered Dr. Singer's advice and also thought about the example he would be setting for his three children. "I want them to see that you need to complete something you start."

Alan contacted Union County College's Dean of Students Jo Ann Davis-Wayne, who enlisted College Registrar Nina Hernandez and Director of Advisement, Career and Transfer Services Heather Keith.



I want them to see that you need to complete something you start." – Alan Pitts

Their collective verdict: Alan Pitts had fulfilled the necessary requirements for an associate degree—back in 1979. All that was left undone was for him to complete an application to graduate.

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Notes from the Graduating Class of...

1978

Steve Matilsky has been president of Matilsky Construction for 12 years.

1980

John Dent is the owner of Parking Productions, which provides parking services for special events throughout the New York region.

Barbara (Geisler) Blanco has been a quality-assurance specialist at NCS Technologies Inc. for the past 12 years. As such, she manages quality assurance for various clients. These clients have included Novartis, AT&T, Grow Network, Vonage, and Cingular. She is responsible for all software testing phases and staffing. After graduating from Union, she earned a certificate in computer programming from the Chubb Institute.

Brian Bender is a director of external operations at Johnson & Johnson. After graduating from Union, he earned a bachelor's degree from Rider University in 1983.

Jim Rau is a manager of Campus Administration for the United States Golf Association.

1983

Elizabeth Rowe Groothuis is a recruitment and enrollment specialist for the College of St. Elizabeth.

1984

Michael Miranda is the North Jersey area sales manager of Somerville-based Capital One Home Loans.

1985

John Mihalko is a vice president at Xsubc Electronics, LLC. After graduating from Union, he earned a bachelor's degree at Fairleigh Dickinson University.

1986

Joe Lopes is the director of engineering and project management at Window City Inc.

1987

Michael Smith is the vice president for revenue platforms and operations for Hearst Magazines Digital Media. After graduating from Union, he earned a bachelor's of science in Electrical Engineering from the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

1988

Annmarie Mason is a licensed practical nurse for the ARC of Somerset County.

1989

Paulo Coelho is the president at Golpac Group Inc. After graduating from Union, he received a bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

1990

Michael DeMarco is the senior systems consultant at Realogy/NRT Inc.

Debra Wodzinski is the operations director at Cemtek Systems, Inc.

Daniel Haag is the online editor for John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

1991

Glen Karlovitch is a vice president at Merrill Lynch. After Union, he earned a bachelor's of science at Kean University.



The Union County College Foundation's Scholarship Gala Committee is chaired again this year by Alumna Suzanne Covine (left). Other alumni on the Committee are Mary Zimmermann (second from left), Carol Hertling (third from left), and Kathy Giannecchini (seated, left). The Gala will be held on Nov. 7 at the County's newly minted Clubhouse at Galloping Hill in Kenilworth.

1992

Thomas Rickey is a confidential investigator for the New York City Department of Education's Office of Special Investigations. His career in law enforcement began in 1988 with the Union County Police Department as a patrol officer for 10 years. In 1999, he was assigned to the Union County Prosecutor's Office Narcotic Strike Force, where he conducted numerous narcotic investigations. Then in 2001, as a detective sergeant, he was assigned to the Union County Prosecutor's Office Gang Task Force, where he supervised a team of detectives.

1993

Rosalie Kuper is the senior paralegal for Greenbaum, Rowe, Smith & Davis LLP.

Please Tell Us About



Since Union's 1933 founding, more than a million students have attended Union. Our mission is to keep in touch with all of you, but we need your help. Send us an update about yourself at nacco@ucc.edu or by snail mail to Rebecca May, Union College Life, 1033 Springfield Av., Cranford, NJ 07016. You'll appear in a future issue of *Union Reunion*.

Union Re-Union

This is an official publication of Union County College: Dr. Margaret M. McMenemy, President; Dr. Maris Lown, Chief Academic Officer; Mrs. Helen Brewer, Vice President, Student Development; Tammy Smith, Dean of College Life; and Rebecca May, Manager of College Life.

The newsletter is produced quarterly by the College Relations Department, Ellen Dotto, Executive Director; Sara Bontempo, Graphic Designer.

From the Class of '55

Paying a recent visit to Union was Zoltan “Zook” Pope (seated, second from left), a graduate of Union’s class of 1955. Prior to entering College, Zook was a captain for a merchant-marine ship during World War II and helped rescue troops during the Battle of the Bulge. After the war, he says, “I remember coming to Union and attending at night, and then going on to Rutgers after I graduated.” After college, he rose to prominence at the Ford Motor Company, retiring as a plant manager with a staff of 3,200. Shown here to Zook’s right is the College’s Board Chair Vic Richel. To Zook’s left are Vic’s wife Andrea and Zook’s wife Mary. Standing, right, in a row of current students is President Margaret McMenamain.



1994

Christopher Nickel owns Island Tans and Power Wash Plus.

1995

Dana Rotkiewicz is the vice president of sales for Kooba Handbags.

1996

Inge Oleksy earned a radiology degree at Union and works as a mammographer at Summit Medical Group.

1997

Jason Pircher is an assistant director for Corporate Treasury Strategic Initiatives at AIG. After graduating from Union, he earned a bachelor’s degree from Rutgers.

1998

Pamela Beelitz is the owner of CAMP

Associates, a company specializing in health, wellness and fitness.

1999

Burnell Paul is the president and CEO of BP Enterprises LLC, which provides legal services.

2000

Lois Bass is the community-relations coordinator at Infineum USA L.P. – Manufacturing.

2001

Stan Bell owns Maribell Safety and Health Institute.



2003

Maria Tafurth (right) was a 2003 graduate and is an associate director from Pfizer. Escorting her around the campus is Union County College Foundation Board Member Bill Collins and Foundation Board Chair and College Trustee Mary Zimmermann.

2007

Lauren Porter is the webmaster at The Law Offices of Jef Henninger, Esq. She previously served as a Web designer at Evans Alliance and at the Gold Group.

Kirsten Beck is the director of Project Management at Avison Young.

2009

Jacqueline Ziarek is a personal banker at Wells Fargo of Springfield. At Union, she earned an associate of arts in Business.

Elizabeth Jacinto is the general manager of Destination Maternity Corporation.

2010

Christopher Singletary is a warehouse/equipment agent for United Airlines.

2011

Joan Ikinya is a research-and-development engineer for Nice-Pak Products, Inc. of Montvale, NJ. She is also the president of the Institute of Industrial Engineers. After earning her associate of arts in Industrial Engineering at Union, she received a bachelor’s of arts in Industrial Engineering from the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

Union Re-Union

Alumni Board of Directors:

Jeff Chait, '94, President; Nancy Benz '73, Vice President; Suzanne Covine '58, Treasurer; Donna Herran '85, Secretary. Trustees: Bonnie Bendlin '68, Camille Cormier '81, Marion Curka '50, Donna Herran '85, Jean Kellogg '01, Linda Ives Kurdilla '89, Patrick LaQuaglia '76, Susan Lordi '13, Marlene Abitanto '97, Melinda Ayala '11, and Marion Menzer '47.



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In other words, Alan Pitts was eligible to enjoy all of the rights and privileges of a Union County College graduate—but he never knew it.

His official graduation date is Aug. 31, 2014. He is welcome to participate in the College's Commencement Ceremonies and says, "I wouldn't miss it for the world."

We suspect he'll be attending the January 14, 2015, ceremony in Cranford. This year, for the first time in Union's 81-year history, the College has begun holding Commencement in both January and May.

Alan's message to his fellow Union County College alumni is the same he has for his children: "A College education is something no one can ever take away from you."

His future plans: "I think I want to move on to get my bachelor's degree, also in Criminal Justice."

Alan has one important caveat, though. "For the bachelor's, though, I don't think I can afford to wait another 35 years to complete my degree."

Alumni Scholarship for Success

The Alumni Association has a great way for you to "pay it forward" to help future generations of Union County College students make it all the way to the finish line of graduation.

As Alumni, you are invited to contribute to the "Alumni Scholarship for Degree Completion" by mailing in your donation via the attached envelope. Or else you may donate online by clicking the "Donate" button at www.uccfoundation.org and then typing in "Alumni Scholarship" in the blank box.

For more information or to speak to a person about making a donation, call Stephen Nacco or Kathy Giannecchini at (908) 709-7506.

Please Plan to Attend

- **Union County College Scholarship Gala**, Fri., Nov. 7 at Clubhouse at Galloping Hill
- **Alumni Association Speakers' Series:** Featuring Ricky Riccardi, Author and Archivist for the Louis Armstrong Museum, Sun., Oct. 5, 2 p.m., Roy Smith Theater

For more information about these events, contact College Life at 908-709-7093.



Jazz historian Ricky Riccardi will be in the Roy Smith Theater on Oct. 5 to look at the life of "Satchmo" the trumpet maestro, Louis Armstrong.

Prize Donations Welcome

The Union County College Alumni Association welcomes your donations of new or gently used "attic treasures." The Association would also welcome gift cards or certificates for goods or services.

Your donations will help the College raise scholarship money either during the Nov. 7 Gala or else a possible Winter Auction. Every dollar raised for your item will be contributed to the College's scholarship fund. You will receive a letter acknowledging the dollar amount that your item has raised.

To donate a new or gently used item, and to schedule a pick-up, please contact the Foundation Office at (908) 709-7506.