Two students recognized with Rising Star awards have one thing in common: the pursuit of higher education to fulfill career aspirations of helping others. Aurora residents Ryan Manzanares and Susanne Withrow will join their award-winning peers from other Colorado community colleges at an April 14 luncheon when they receive awards from the State Student Advisory Council (SSAC) and the Colorado Community College System.

Each year, the SSAC offers awards to community college students who exhibit a high level of leadership and involvement in student activities. Nominees must be taking at least nine credit hours, involved in campus life, and maintain a college GPA of at least 3.0.

Withrow moved to Colorado from Germany just over two years ago and admits she had some anxiety about enrolling in college. “It took a lot of courage to start a new life far away from everything I used to know,” she says. “CCA helped me during this transition and showed me that I can achieve so much more than I ever thought possible.”

Withrow is Psychology Club president and Student Government Association secretary. She holds an internship position at the CCA STD testing center and a job in the Office of Student Life. She is a member of Phi Theta Kappa and has been on the President’s List for fall 2009, spring 2010, and fall 2010. She has volunteered at the Ronald McDonald House and for CCA’s Take Back the Night events and Global Citizens Conference.

She plans a career in the field of clinical psychology and says that the skills she has acquired at CCA will help get her there. Following graduation from CCA, Withrow plans to transfer to the University of Colorado Denver for a bachelor’s of science in psychology.

Ryan Manzanares is dedicated to helping people. A volunteer at homeless shelters, she serves food, collects dishes, and brings her general good cheer to others. She makes blankets and passes them out to homeless people. She mentors fellow students at CCA with their homework because she wants to see them succeed.

Ryan Manzanares is Vice president of fundraising for the college’s Phi Theta Kappa chapter, Manzanares also is student representative on the Student Government Association. She believes that being successful in school is among her biggest accomplishments, acknowledging that it is a challenge because she also cares for her parents, both of whom are ill. She plans to take all this life experience with her when she transfers to Regis University for a bachelor’s degree in business management, because her ultimate goal is to open a homeless rehabilitation center.

A roller derby aficionado—not as an observer, but as a participant—Manzanares brings her competitive skills to college activities. Angie Tiedeman, director of the Office of Student Life and one of Manzanares’ mentors, notes that Manzanares has been instrumental in helping the college’s Phi Theta Kappa chapter earn Five Star Status, the top level a chapter can earn. “Ryan has written three Hallmark award essays for our chapter, impressive work for a student who is already juggling so much,” she says.
“Exploring the Cosmos from the Moon”: Dr. Jack O. Burns to deliver April 18 Sherlin Lecture

Dr. Jack O. Burns from the University of Colorado Boulder will deliver the Sherlin Lecture on Monday, April 18, at 7:30 p.m. His presentation is titled “Exploring the Cosmos from the Moon.”

The lecture, which is free and open to the public, will be held in the Fine Arts Building Forum on the CentreTech Campus. The college observatory will be open for free public viewing after the lecture, weather permitting.

City Manager George “Skip” Noe shares insights with students

When Aurora’s new city manager paid a visit to Political Science Instructor Bobby Pace’s “American State and Local Government” class last month, students had no qualms about combining their academic pursuits with personal concerns about Aurora.

George “Skip” Noe was peppered with questions about the city and its operations, and students wanted to know about crime, ward boundaries, the budget, FasTracks development, and dangerous traffic intersections. Noe answered every inquiry and said that fielding questions like these is typical for someone in his position. “The challenge with having a government job is that when you field a complaint or concern, citizens don’t care who is responsible for it or who gets it done—they just want it done!” he said with a smile. “I have a pretty aggressive open door policy and will meet with virtually every citizen about their concerns. I can’t necessarily solve every problem, but I have a responsibility to listen and try to come up with solutions.”

Noe compared the politics and logistics of running a mid-sized American city with running a large corporation. He offered an account of his evolution from high school teacher to the upper echelons of city government in San Antonio, Corpus Christi, and Fort Collins. Starting out as a volunteer for local city council, Noe said he got addicted to the idea of local government and what it can do for citizens.

There are many similarities between Aurora and Corpus Christi, said Noe, who was that city’s manager from 2003 to 2008. “Despite being 1,200 miles apart, with one city on the water, the other not, they are quite alike, believe it or not,” he said. “Each city has about 2,700 employees and a budget of approximately...continued on page 3
The courage to start over: Benin native finds new home in Aurora

The promise of opportunity in America can be enough to make a person leave behind a life they’ve always known. For Yelignan Houessou, that would be 7,000 miles behind, far from his family in Benin, West Africa. Houessou’s journey, 24 hours by plane, has taken him from Casablanca to New York City to Denver and, finally, to Aurora, to relaunch his education and career.

Just over one year ago, Houessou left his job as an administrative manager for a private business in Cotonou, Benin, a port city of nearly one million people, for an unknown part of the world. It’s all part of a larger plan: he is here to improve his English language skills, enhance his exposure to the business community, and obtain another degree. Houessou has a master’s degree in business law from the Université d’Abomey-Calavi, the main campus of the University of Benin.

After evaluating projected growth rates for various careers, Houessou opted for software engineering and mustered his determination to come to America. But why not start over back home, where things are familiar, where you can be near your four younger brothers? “I need to practice this language if I am to be in business,” says Houessou, whose native language is French. “My speech, my English, was not good when I moved here. If I learn English, it will help me to get a better job.” He plans to transfer to an as-yet undetermined college or university to earn a bachelor’s degree.

After his arrival, Houessou quickly found work at Denver International Airport. He works at several restaurants there and acknowledges, with a quick smile, that he does not want a career in the food business here or back home. Taking a friend’s recommendation, he enrolled in three English as a Second Language (ESL) classes through CCA’s Community ESL program. This program teaches English to adults so that they may learn language skills necessary for work and day-to-day life in the United States. For many CCA students, these courses are the precursor to enrollment in college-level, credit-bearing courses.

And, indeed, he has found a home-away-from-home at CCA. Having rapidly advanced in Community ESL, Houessou is taking four college-credit classes this semester. His instructors marvel at his improvement: “From the first day of the semester, I could tell Yelignan was a serious student with much potential,” says Maria Halloran, ESL faculty member. “I knew there was a lot he had to offer our country and his by improving his English language skills.

He was a thoughtful participant in class, and he was always willing to help other students.” Halloran is thrilled he has moved into and is succeeding in college-level courses. “Yelignan is representative of many of our students who just need to overcome the language barrier to achieve their dreams and be productive members of society, no matter where they live,” she says.

Houessou confirms that he is learning by leaps and bounds. “All of the teachers at CCA are hard, but they are good,” he says. He adds that Halloran has been especially supportive in helping him make the transition to life and education in the United States. “She reached out to me when I needed advice, and she told me a lot of things about how I need to organize my schedule to be successful,” he says. This semester, Houessou is enrolled in college algebra, advanced grammar, intermediate composition, and intermediate reading. His summer plans include two CCA classes: advanced composition and trigonometry, which will put him well on the way to the credits he needs to transfer.

Houessou keeps touch with his family by phone and, in his free time, seeks out African food markets to keep any homesickness at bay. What is the biggest cultural difference he sees? “People here work very, very hard,” he says. “Here, people work at night, not just the day. I am not used to that.” Regardless, Houessou is now immersed in American life. “CCA has helped me with my goals and dreams,” he explains. “CCA has helped me improve my English before I attend a four-year university. CCA has helped me, and other students, to improve their skills before taking higher-level classes. I will now be better prepared for the business world.”

“Skip” Noe ...continued from page 2

$600 million. And both are diverse, urban communities.”

He stressed that local government is an important part of daily life in any community. “Local government gives a foundation for a higher quality of life, because we oversee crucial infrastructure such as roads and water,” he explained.

When asked what a typical day is like, he laughed: “Well, we use a Microsoft Outlook calendar, and there are no ‘blanks’ on the calendar, and the timeslots don’t stop at 5 p.m.” he said. Adding that he never knows what a day can hold, Noe recalled a recent tour of Children’s Hospital. “I was recruited on the spot to read a Dr. Seuss book to young patients,” he said. He also cited visits to the Aurora Campus for Renewable Energy and to the city’s newest water treatment facility. “There is no substitute for actually seeing things,” he said. “They are opportunities to share and listen, because a large part of my job is to hear what issues and concerns there are in the community so that we can work the solutions into what we do.”
Animal-assisted therapy specialists visit psych club

The student psychology club hosted Dr. Linda Chassman of Animal Assisted Therapy and Emily Stewart of Mirror Method of Dog Training on March 11 to learn about the participation of dogs and other animals in therapy treatment. Dr. Chassman emphasized that animals can help patients overcome various issues in numerous ways. When interacting with animals, patients can work on problem-solving, assertiveness, confidence, tolerance, self-awareness, and self-control. She added that working and playing with dogs—talking, hugging, training on agility courses—can be especially beneficial. She said that many patients find it difficult to interact with a therapist but will open up to animals.

CCA hosts transfer fair

CCA hosted a College Transfer Fair in the Student Centre Rotunda on Feb. 24. Approximately 25 different colleges and universities participated in the event and fielded questions from potential students.

Math enthusiasts enjoy some Pi

A Pi Day celebration was held at CCA, coincidentally enough, on March 14 (3.14). Held from 11 a.m. to 1:59 p.m. (3.14159), the event featured a brief history of Pi, as well as rounds of Pi trivia, a Pi memorization contest, and team competitions.

Math Department Chair James Gray and Math Instructor Sasa Jovic took turns leading the students through Pi Day events. One of the most challenging tests proved to be a Pi memorization contest, in which students studied the first 41 digits of \( \pi \) posted on a wall of the Student Centre Rotunda. Then, one by one, contestants donned blindfolds and recited the numbers aloud from memory. Pictured here, student Isaac Slate searches his memory in an effort to recite as many digits as possible without peeking.
Renowned artist showcases CCA summer course

Leo Tanguma, Colorado’s famous Chicano mural artist, spoke at the Lowry Campus on March 8 and previewed a mural painting course he plans to teach at the college this summer.

Considered one of the best mural artists in the nation, Tanguma’s work can be found in churches, prisons, and schools. Well known for his murals at Denver International Airport, Tanguma’s work incorporates aspects of sculpture along with an unmistakable artistic style that addresses social, political, and race issues.

Tanguma has worked with youth and other groups to create thought-provoking paintings. “A key element found in my work is the struggle for human liberation and democracy,” he said. “I want young people to see themselves as heroes. They should accept their own dignity, history, and culture.”

Tanguma’s summer class is slated to create a wall mural on the Lowry Campus quad. Tanguma said that “if we paint murals (at CCA), they will not be empty images, I promise.”

Class offers community screening

Students in Peggy Norwood’s Abnormal Psychology class hosted a community-wide health screening program on Feb. 23 in recognition of National Eating Disorders Awareness Week. Participants learned about the prevalence of eating disorders in the United States, discovered the warning signs and criteria for diagnosis, and learned about treatment options. Information about prevention and leading a healthy lifestyle also was available.

The students operated eight standalone stations offering information about eating disorders. As part of the project, students participated in a pilot study on using iPads for instruction and learning and integrated the technology into the research and delivery of information during the event.

Phi Theta Kappa induction held

Students assembled on the second floor of the Student Centre prior to the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society induction on March 24.
Preliminary Tax Help results a record-breaker

CCA’s Tax Help Colorado site has broken its own record four years in a row, according to results provided by the Piton Foundation. The Foundation spearheads the annual free tax service at numerous sites around the state.

Between Jan. 29 and March 12, trained volunteers at the college prepared and e-filed taxes free of charge for eligible individuals and families on behalf of Tax Help Colorado. CCA volunteers processed 1,151 tax returns, and refunds of $2,698,212 were returned to taxpayers. Refunds last year totaled more than $2.3 million.

Transition Fair draws many

About 50 vendors provided information to students with disabilities and their families at a Transition Fair held at CCA on Feb. 17. Information booths were available from colleges and post-secondary schools; adult community services; recreation services; mental health and county health services; advocacy services; Social Security; transportation; and vocational rehabilitation. Additionally, public school transition services representatives were on hand from Aurora Public Schools, Cherry Creek Public Schools, and Littleton Public Schools. Approximately 150 community members attended the fair.

Commencement slated for May 7

CCA’s graduation ceremony will be held May 7 at the Arapahoe County Fairgrounds Event Center in Aurora.

Matt Gianneschi, Ph.D., will deliver the commencement address. The college’s former vice president of student services and enrollment management, Gianneschi now is deputy executive director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education. Gianneschi reports that at CCA, he had the privilege of "working with and cheering on the most charitable and dedicated student services staff in all of Colorado." Additional remarks at the commencement will be offered by President Linda S. Bowman. The ceremony will begin at 11 a.m., and more than 1,000 friends and family of the graduates, along with CCA faculty and staff, are expected to be on hand to celebrate the accomplishments of the graduates.
Kudos to . . .
Peggy Norwood, who now is host and producer of “Living Well with Dr. Peg,” a weekly, call-in talk radio show airing on KLDC (1220 AM). With input from expert guests, Norwood shares psychological strategies for resolving a wide range of mental health and wellness concerns. Tune in Fridays at 4 p.m. on 1220 AM at www.1220kldc.com. And kudos to Colorado Film School alumnus Brandon Luck McDuffey, whose film “New Broken Calculator” was accepted into the 2011 Aspen Shortsfest film festival. The acceptance marks the first time a CFS film has been accepted into this festival. McDuffey reports that his film is in consideration for Festival de Cannes and the Palm Springs International Shorts Fest.

CPR, first aid courses open to public
CCA now offers dozens of CPR and First Aid courses to members of the community for a very affordable price. The courses are open to all levels of learners, from novices to professionals (teachers, coaches, health care practitioners, construction workers, etc.). The classes are primarily available on Saturdays, with some exceptions for higher-level courses, and tuition ranges from $50-150. Classes include Heartsaver First Aid, Heartsaver CPR, Advanced Cardiac Life Support, Basic Life Support, and Pediatric Life Support, along with recertification courses for working professionals.

Take Back the Night Rally open to all
A series of events will comprise CCA’s third annual Take Back the Night Rally on April 21. Most events will take place in the Student Centre Rotunda between 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. TBTN promotes the safety and empowerment of women, and it is a demonstration that allows people to come together and demand an end to sexual assault and violence. Activities will vary throughout the day and will include self-defense training, local agency representation, music, food, informational presentations, student posters, readings from “The Vagina Monologues,” and more.

CCAF scholarship luncheon to celebrate students, donors
The sixth annual Community College of Aurora Foundation scholarship luncheon will be held April 21. The event will recognize students receiving 2011 scholarships, acknowledge donors who have made the scholarships possible, and highlight the impact of past support on the scholarship program. This year’s attendees will enjoy a special celebration held on the Lowry Campus quad. The event’s Presenting Sponsor is ADT®.

International Fest to be held April 26
The college’s Sixth Annual International Festival will offer a unique opportunity for students to showcase the different cultures present at CCA and to learn about the college’s diverse student body. This year’s theme is Island Cultures.

Save the date: Colorado Film School Student Show. 7 p.m., May 5. Paramount Theatre, 1621 Glenarm Place, Denver, CO 80202.
Come see the best of what the Colorado Film School’s aspiring filmmakers have to offer! Free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.ColoradoFilmSchool.net.

Visit www.ccaurora.edu/news-events/event-calendar for future events.

Flickers of Light Student Film Festival. 2-4 p.m., April 17. Aurora Central Library, 14949 E. Alameda Parkway, Aurora 80012.
The Aurora Public Library, in conjunction with CCA’s Colorado Film School, presents an all-new student film festival. Watch the films, meet their creators, and learn more about the art of filmmaking. Free. Contact 303-739-6600 for more information.

Earth Day Recycling Event. 9 a.m.-12 noon, April 23. Bluff Lake Nature Center, on the eastern edge of Stapleton.
Recycle old electronics, books, and other items. To reach Bluff Lake Nature Center, go north on Moline from Montview Boulevard. Stay on Moline until it becomes Havana Way. The entrance to the nature center is immediately after Moline turns to become Havana Way. Contact 303-344-0031 for more information.

See www.auroragov.org for more events.