Everybody has a story to tell, and Blanca Hunter is no exception. A native of Panama, Hunter met and married her husband, Bill, a Seattle native, while he was in that Central American country on assignment for the U.S. Air Force. Several assignments later, not to mention four children, the family is now stationed on the Buckley Air Force Base.

Hunter had previously earned a high school diploma but never had the chance to experience college. Along came CCA and the Spouse Employment Program sponsored by Buckley, offering a chance to enroll in computer courses.

“This was a good opportunity to start going to school, because I had always felt like there was a big world in front of me, but, with English as my second language, I wasn’t prepared for that world,” Hunter reports. Grateful to the U.S. Air Force for the opportunity, she also is thankful to CCA for the convenient class schedule.

“It was perfect, because it was after my husband’s work hours, and that way he could watch the kids,” she says. “So off I went to classes at CCA Lowry Friday nights and Saturday mornings.”

Hunter credits her success in earning eight college credits this summer with “a really good, really patient instructor”—Jeffrey Weide, a CCA adjunct instructor and active military member himself—and says that the experience made her more confident.

“After this class, believe me, I know so much more about computers,” she says. “Before CCA, the only thing I knew was how to check e-mail and send pictures.”

According to course instructor Weide, “the program offers military spouses the opportunity to learn introductory and advanced Microsoft Office concepts. This course assists the student with today’s technologically demanding jobs.” He added that by learning how to use these common Office applications, “these students now have a leg up when competing in the job market.”

Hunter and her classmates worked for 12 weeks over the summer to complete a series of courses in Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, and PowerPoint and earned certificates of recognition through Buckley’s Spouse Employment Program.

The Arapahoe/Douglas Works! Workforce Center has opened a branch office in CCA’s Building 859 on the Lowry Campus.

It is expected that between 50-100 workforce center clients per day will find the A/D Works! Blue Hallway at the south end of the building. Orientations, job-search workshops, client counseling, and A/D Works’ groundbreaking “Employment by Design” boot camp for job seekers will be ongoing.

The center provides targeted services for current clients, and CCA officials remind the public that the office is not open as a walk-in center.

“A/D Works has opened a center of hope here at Lowry,” said CCA Director of Strategic Partnerships Shelley Wood. “As clients explore new career directions, some will identify educational needs, and we hope they will choose CCA or one of our sister community colleges.” Wood added that hosting the workforce center at Lowry “is another way CCA is stepping up to do everything we can for our community.”
Hunter knows exactly what she wants to do next. “I want to take English as a Second Language classes, particularly to get better at writing, and I want to get my nursing degree,” she says. “This has been a really good experience. I feel like I’m a new person.”

Hunter was part of an Aug. 21 mini-graduation at Buckley, hosted by the Airman and Family Readiness Center. Following opening remarks by Sandra Whitaker, Airman and Family Readiness consultant, 2008 program graduate Brenda Moyer addressed those gathered. “If it weren’t for CCA, I probably wouldn’t be employed right now,” she said. “And I wouldn’t be employed in a job I love.”

Lt. Col. William F. Morrison, II, Deputy Commander, 460th Mission Support Group, offered a special thanks to CCA President Linda Bowman and spoke of the importance of the CCA/Buckley collaboration. “Without community partners who support active duty military, we could not do what we do,” he said. “What was once considered a brief partnership has flourished into a long-standing relationship between Buckley Air Force Base and CCA.”

Funding for military spouse participation in the program this year was made available by the CCA Foundation and the Air Force Aid Society. This is the third year in a row that the Air Force Aid Society has provided an educational grant for active duty Air Force spouses participating in the Spouse Employment Program. Without the Air Force Aid Society’s program, this military spouse educational program would not exist. CCAF for the first time this year established scholarships in support of the program so that no eligible military spouse from Buckley who wanted to further her education would be denied the opportunity.

According to Karla Adamson-Lesko, CCA faculty member in computers and business and a founding organizer of the program, “CCA’s goal is to help these individuals acquire job-ready skills, and we want to touch the lives of military spouses who so often are left behind. We help them to build their self-esteem, confidence, and networking skills to change their lives for the better.”

New faculty, staff join CCA

More than 20 new faculty and staff members have joined the Community College of Aurora since mid-May—welcome additions to a college that is responding to a large increase in student enrollment over this time last year.

CCA officially welcomes the following individuals:

Clinton Andersen, Director, Critical Incident Theater
Rachel Ankney, Reading/English Faculty
Nancy Case, Dean of Health Sciences
Allison Cepello, Financial Aid Counselor
Kelly Cowan, EMS Faculty
Nathan Crow, TANF Job Transition Specialist
Brandon Feres, Reading/English Faculty
James Gillespie, Coordinator of Annual Giving and Alumni Affairs
Olivia Gill, English Faculty
Stephanie Lawton, Non-Credit ESL Program Coordinator/Lead Teacher
Phil Myers, Engineering Technology/Renewable Energy Faculty
Richard Maestas, Vice President of Administrative Services
Aldo Parra, Case Manager
Julie Predmore, Administrative Assistant III
Patrick Schooler, EMS Chair
Mary Schwarzenberg Graham, Administrative Assistant III
John Smith, Custodian I
Robert Sokol, Assistant Controller
Judy Steele, Administrative Assistant I
Chris Tombari, ESL Chair
Natasha Turner, Education & Teacher Preparation Faculty/Department Chair
Benjamin Valdez, Business Chair
Victor Vialpando, Dean of Instruction (Lowry campus)
CCA student and Aurora resident Hanh Hoang has been named a Phi Theta Kappa Leader of Promise for 2009. She is one of only 30 students in the entire Phi Theta Kappa organization to be selected for this singular honor. Phi Theta Kappa is the international honor society for two-year colleges.

As a PTK Leader of Promise, Hoang has been awarded a $1,000 scholarship to facilitate completion of an associate degree at CCA and her continued participation in Phi Theta Kappa. Hoang will serve as the vice president of service of CCA’s Alpha Pi Pi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa for the 2009-10 academic year. The Leaders of Promise/Geico Business Student Scholarship is the Society's first scholarship program available to members to be used during the time they are enrolled in their community colleges.

Hoang is pursuing an associate of science degree with an emphasis in mathematics at CCA and plans to graduate next May. She is considering furthering her education at the Colorado School of Mines.

Hoang has enjoyed her time at CCA and has been actively involved in numerous volunteer activities. She has volunteered for the Food Bank of the Rockies and the CCA Student Food Bank, the annual High Line Canal Cleanup, and the annual 9Health Fair.

“Volunteering is a great way to feel a true sense of involvement at CCA,” Hoang says. “The key word is 'community,' and I do feel that I am an important part of the college and the community.” Hoang, who also works part-time as a catering driver for Atlanta Bread in Aurora, maintains a near-perfect 3.99 GPA at CCA.

CCA student Hanh Hoang named a “Leader of Promise” by national organization

“I it's all about the opportunity.”

Could it be said any better than that? According to Leigh Bessey, CCA’s director of recruiting and career services, if you want to start college at CCA, you can sign up on a Friday and start on Monday. “Many of our course offerings are now offered outside the boundaries of a traditional 15-week semester,” she explains. “When you’re out of work, you need to see results quickly. With these new programs, you’ll have something on your resume right away to make you more employable.”

All of this is part of CCA’s new eXpress Ed initiative, launched earlier in the year as a direct response to the economic downturn. eXpress Ed courses offer convenient and affordable ways for people to get retrained and upgrade jobs skills so they can compete for jobs that are in demand in the new economy. And students are responding, according to Bessey—especially those who have been “displaced” or are out of work.

eXpress Ed classes are popular at CCA, but so are the college’s new Recession-Proof Workshops. The Career Center now offers sessions on resume and cover letter writing, career exploration, employment strategies, and financial aid, in addition to providing a host of resources such as books and reference materials on careers, a computer and a printer for job searching, and the ever-popular Job Club.

Bessey also has announced a brand new slate of workshops that will be offered in the coming academic year. Details are coming soon on the following new sessions: an entrepreneurial series, Finding a College Major, Getting a Job After 50, Social Networking, Business Etiquette, a STEM career fair, and a Career Fitness Week in the spring designed especially for CCA grads-to-be.

And that’s not all; there is a wealth of new scholarship aid available to students in need. There’s the Graduation Semester Scholarship, for those in their final semester at CCA; the New Program Scholarship, applicable to new vocational program areas at the college; the Displaced Worker Tuition Grant, for eligible unemployed students who were laid off within the last two years and for dependent students whose parents are unemployed due to layoffs in the last two years; the Continuing Student Academic Scholarship, a merit-based scholarship of up to $500; the Exceptional Need-Based Grant for eligible students who do not qualify for Pell grants; and the High School Honors Scholarship, for eligible first-time, full-time recent high school graduates and home-schooled high school grads.

CCA continues to respond to the educational needs of the community with eXpress Ed programs, recession-proof strategies, and more. Stay tuned for additional news!
Over the summer, individuals in English as a Second Language Level III classes were recognized for perfect class attendance. Pictured here, from left, are students in instructor John Eichenour’s class: Maria G. Razo, America López, Gildardo García, and Eugene Mpoto. Mpoto hails from the Democratic Republic of Congo; the other three students are from Mexico.

To celebrate the last day of class over the summer, several students in English as a Second Language Level III classes attended school in their native dress. Pictured here are, from left, Najmo Salad and Amal M. Isse, both from Somalia, and Samira Hassan, from Sudan.

CCA Psych Club raises funds for NAMI

The CCA Psychology Club sponsored a team for this summer’s National Alliance on Mental Illness Colorado (NAMI) Fundraising Walk at Cheesman Park, and the group raised more than $640 for the organization, much of it from CCA faculty and staff. The walk raised more than $125,000 overall. All funds raised will be used to support NAMI’s programs in Colorado.

CCA faculty, staff, and friends who participated in a walk to raise funds for the National Alliance on Mental Illness are, from left: Sabrina Jones, Emelda Jones, Fatmata Kargbo, Pamela Bynog, Chani McDowell, Peggy Norwood, Bobbie Boykin, Chrystaler Tutson, and Ali Norwood. Tutson’s children, in front, round out the walkers pictured here.

Peggy Norwood (at right) with Colorado First Lady Jeannie Ritter at the NAMI walk. Norwood, a CCA psychology instructor, is advisor for the CCA Psychology Club and a NAMI Colorado board member.
Strategic goals announced for CCA

With the new academic year under way at the Community College of Aurora, the college administration has announced strategic goals for CCA for 2009 through 2013. The goals were crafted and finalized over the last year.

Goal 1: Increase student retention, completion, and transfer rates. The college will focus on improving student engagement and academic success. Strategies for these improvements will include, among others: Strengthening support services for all students taking classes in alternative formats, including online; addressing student needs for financial aid, recreation, and social activities; strengthening programs such as developmental education, ESL, tutoring, and orientation; and upgrading facilities.

Goal 2: Continually improve student learning. The college will consistently emphasize its commitment to high quality, rigorous, student-centered instruction. Among the strategies to achieve this commitment will be the adoption of best practices from other institutions or from research; incorporating simulation and other innovative strategies to deliver instruction; adding full-time faculty positions when possible; increasing the availability of library, technology, and other support services; globalizing CCA’s curriculum; and maintaining effective physical learning environments. The college will add fast-track programs and open entry classes starting every week to give students the option of completing some certificates and degrees at a faster pace.

Goal 3: Increase student enrollment. CCA will reach out to groups underrepresented in the student population. To reach higher enrollment numbers, CCA will offer and market new programs in additional occupational and academic areas and introduce innovations in class scheduling, format, and delivery. The college will provide students and potential students with a clearer understanding of career pathways and ways to continue their education through transfer agreements with Colorado four-year colleges and universities.

Goal 4: Strengthen human resources. The college will implement strategies such as expanding professional development and recognition for faculty and staff at all levels, building community within CCA. The college will improve methods for employee recruitment and selection so that CCA has the best possible person in every position.

Goal 5: Strengthen the college’s visibility and community relations. CCA will expand relationships with employers and the workforce system, strengthen partnerships with K-12 and post-secondary education, and promote collaboration with the CCA Foundation. The college will encourage community involvement by faculty and staff. Through public relations and marketing via various media outlets, CCA will provide information to the community about the excellence of its faculty and programs and its accomplishments in areas such as sustainability, globalization, and diversity.

The full description of CCA’s strategic goals can be found at http://www.ccaurora.edu/college/.

Safety tips to minimize the potential effects of the H1N1 flu

- Practice good hygiene by washing your hands with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer frequently. Hand sanitizer dispensers are mounted in bathrooms around campus. Disinfecting wipes are available to wipe down counter tops, door handles, keyboards, monitors, and phones. This is particularly important in high traffic areas.
- Practice respiratory etiquette by covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don’t have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth; germs are spread this way.
- Know the signs and symptoms of the H1N1 flu, which are similar to symptoms of seasonal flu and generally include a fever of greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people with H1N1 flu have also reported diarrhea and vomiting. If you are sick with flu-like symptoms described above, please stay home!
- Talk with your health care providers about whether you should be vaccinated for H1N1 and/or seasonal flu. Watch for information on local vaccination sites in the coming weeks.

For the most up-to-date information on flu, visit www.flu.gov, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636).
ASIA FAJARDO, MOLINA SOLEIL, AND AJU.

12-1 p.m., Sept. 22, Rotunda, CentreTech campus. Hip Hop, spoken word, and Latin Jazz performances in honor of Hispanic Cultural Month. Free and open to the public.

CCA EMPLOYEE HEALTH FAIRS.

7-10 a.m., Oct. 1, CentreTech campus. 7-10 a.m., Oct. 22, Lowry campus.

LIFE LINE SCREENING ULTRASOUND STROKE TEST.

Oct. 19. CCA faculty and staff may pre-register for the test, which is offered at $50. Call 800-643-6075 to pre-register.

AURORA FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL.

11 a.m.-6 p.m., Sept. 19, Fletcher Plaza, 9898 E. Colfax Ave., Aurora. Music, dance, food, children's activities, and crafts of cultures around the world. Presented by the Northern Aurora Business Association. Admission and activities are free. Contact Pam Wilson, 303-361-6169, for more information.

ANTIQUE APPRAISAL FAIR.

9 a.m.-3 p.m., Sept. 26, Aurora History Museum, 15051 E. Alameda Parkway, Aurora. Call for an appointment to have your antiques and collectibles evaluated by local appraisers at $5 per item. All proceeds benefit the Aurora History Museum Foundation. Contact 303-739-6705 for more information.

For more events, see www.auroragov.org.