Every time Bethany Rittenhouse seemed to encounter rock bottom, another deeper layer emerged.

And, make no mistake, the metaphorical pit she was digging would have challenged even seasoned spelunkers had this locale existed in fact and not just the mind.

Her life seemed to exist on a normal curve after graduating high school in Florida in 2004. Like many recent grads, she planned to take a year off before returning to the classroom. She met a man she loved, had two children, and worked as an administrative assistant at a construction company during her planned hiatus.

That break became a complete breakdown in everything she had envisioned in her life, lasting almost a full decade. There would be no more school during that time but learning experiences that literally left her beaten, battered, a step from the streets, and unrecognizable to herself as the person that she once was.

She saw the man she considered her husband die of an overdose in the same bed in which she slept. She lost her kids and her way. Rittenhouse was no saint in all of this. Drugs, drinking and partying were commonplace, she admitted.

But there were undeserved consequences, too, like the two broken vertebrae she suffered in a domestic violence incident that sent her then-boyfriend to prison for attempted first-degree murder.

It wasn't until sleeping in a van one night after she found out she was pregnant again that she really knew what rock bottom felt like.

"I was homeless. I was addicted to drugs. I was living a life I never imagined," Rittenhouse recalled. "Looking back, I think, 'Oh my gosh, was that really me? Even at my worst I couldn't imagine everything that had happened. And when I found out I was pregnant again, I went..."

Bethany Rittenhouse has a come a long way to find happiness, which includes receiving a Student Success Award this month.
Success

From Page 1

through all these things, like, ‘Am I going to be able to take care of this child? Look at me. Look at where I’m at right now.’ I couldn’t take care of myself – I probably could have, but I didn’t want to. So I reached out to my family … and took myself to a women’s shelter for domestic violence.”

It was the first firm step she had taken to crawl out of the chasm in which she seemingly been trapped. Things were so messy that at first she was unsure whether the child she was carrying should be put up for adoption.

No, she thought. That’s enough. I will raise this child.

And after enduring a birth two months prematurely, then shifting from the women’s shelter to a rehabilitation center for pregnant women who are drug addicted, she found the courage to endure.

The small hands and fixed glances of son Noah, who fought through his own physical battles, only steeled her intentions.

“Pregnancy saved me, but it’s not just that,” Rittenhouse said. “The person that he is and the person that he’s become, even from the time he was tiny, was exactly what I needed. He looks nothing like me at all. He’s like the opposite of me. He’s short with blonde hair and blue eyes. But he’s the reason that I am where I am.”

Where she is now is a multi-layered answer. She’s at the college, in the midst of her third semester, and absolutely killing it in Math and Composition. She’s living in a Denver townhouse with her mother, who helps take care of Noah. And mentally, she’s in another place entirely.

On Dec. 6, she will receive a Student Success Award from CCA, which recognizes people who have overcome extraordinary circumstances in order to further their education. On this count, she more than qualifies.

“I was stable when I got here but now I’m not just stable, but confident – academically, emotionally, mentally, because I know I’m more than my past,” Rittenhouse said. “I’m not that person anymore.”

A change on the horizon

Attending college never left Rittenhouse’s mind, it just became so buried so deep beneath heartache, a chemi-

cal bouillabaisse of drugs that couldn’t penetrate the sadness and numbness she felt, and bad choices, that higher education had become a pipe dream.

The overdose that took her partner with whom she had a boy and a girl began the nasty downward spiral. She left her job, stopped paying for her house and car, which were taken away. The loss of her lover, and in true terms if not legal parlance, her common-law husband, and the accompanying guilt made her feel “that I had nothing to live for.” It also was the first time she thought rock bottom had arrived.

It wasn’t even close to the nadir. She found comfort with another man six months later and, in Rittenhouse’s words, he wasn’t just bad news, “but the worst news of anybody possible.” The violence she experienced left her shattered, mentally and physically. And it was while recovering in the hospital that she was told she no longer would see her two young kids. It added insult to her injuries. It took away her spirit.

She never would return to the scene of the crime, her apartment. Instead, she bolted, and lived a vagabond life, moving from place to place for a day or two or maybe a week at a time. Her drug use went on the uptick to dull a pain that no chemical could penetrate.

“There were times that I wished it was over,” Rittenhouse admitted. “I never set out to do that, but I just didn’t want to think about anything. I just wanted to get so blown out of my mind that none of that mattered. It never really worked out that way.”

The places to which she’d bounced around were beginning to dwindle, which combined with her lack of mental and physical well-being, was a combustible mix.

“I had no fear and really didn’t value my life,” she said.

The worst night was when she found out she was pregnant for a third time. She pulled over, alone, on the side of the road to sleep in that van. She knew she could continue to crash at unsafe locales or simply crash and burn.

But there was also the knowledge that this tiny fetus was growing inside her. It penetrated the heartache. The decision was made to go to the women’s shelter to try and normalize her, if that was even possible.

“I just came to a realization that this is not who I am, regardless of what I had been through,” she said. “I didn’t want to live the next 50 years – if I was lucky, the way I was going, doing what I was doing,” she said.

Her shelter stay was for two weeks. It helped get her on her feet, she said. But it was a six-month commitment to drug rehabilitation after having previously experienced rehab and failing that really began the climb out of the abyss.

“There was nothing in particular that happened but it was like a defining moment that I still remember like it was yesterday when I was like, ‘This is my child. It’s time to get my act together, stop feeling sorry for myself and move forward.’”

She cut all ties to the people that filled her past, except her supportive family that had always stuck by her. Rittenhouse moved in with her mother as a safe haven. Her sister, Christy, was an important sounding board to help improve her mental state.

But, true to what had been recent form, even pregnancy didn’t go smoothly. Noah was born two months premature, “which was another trial that was really scary because he was in the hospital for the entire stretch.”

… So I’m at this hospital with this tiny little person and I think at this time I felt a lot of guilt for everything that had happened before and that I should have tried harder for my other kids.”

Looking at little Noah and wondering if he’d pull through or be saddled with a disability after his early entry into the world only added to the self-imposed pressure. But Noah did go home, which, at the time, was Bethany’s mother’s house. The child spent his first year in Florida.

Even more change was on the ho-
CCA investing $300,000 for Lowry projects

Two projects aimed at improving the environment and accessibility for students and visitors to Lowry Campus are deep in the planning process and could be completed by July, Richard Maestas, CCA’s VP of Administration, said.

A Memorandum Of Understanding currently in use is being drafted for a joint landscaping project with the City of Aurora, led by Mayor Steve Hogan. The city has pledged $100,000 in funding that will be matched by the college. The MOU is expected to be finalized by both sides by January, allowing the bidding process to begin.

Additionally, the company Innerface Architectural Signage Co. has been hired to conduct a signage and way finding project and is in the midst of drafting its recommendations to the Colorado Community College System for its approval. CCA is working on the project in conjunction with CCCS.

The way finding endeavor should enhance flow from existing signage along Sixth Ave. heading east towards Quebec Ave. both into and around campus.

“Lowry from a distance still looks like an old Air Force base, not a community college,” Maestas said. “So we want to do all we can to make it look a little more inviting while also ensuring that our stakeholders are clearly instructed to their campus destination by new signage, avoiding confusion or necessitating a trip to CCA’s welcome desk to obtain directions.”

CCA’s $200,000 financial outlay for its portion of the signage project will be paid, in part, by its Foundation. That endeavor likely will include a new main entrance sign that denotes arrival at Lowry and names other campus tenants, including New America School, University of Northern Colorado and Community College of Denver. There will be some intersection of the two projects, such as placing new landscaping around the entrance sign.

2013 Student Success Awards Ceremony

WHEN: Friday, December 6, Noon to 2 p.m.
WHERE: CentreTech, Student Centre Rotunda
EMCEE: Michelle Twaddell, 2012 Student Success Award winner
FEATURED REMARKS: Rep. Rhonda Fields, D-Aurora
2013 WINNERS:
Mary Anne Navarrete
Blessed Otabil
Maria A. Garibay Campos
Alber R. Lima
Idaly De Reza
Reem Hamodi
Bethany Rittenhouse
Brenda Anderson
Sarah Groves
Rogelio De Reza
Mercedes Barksdale
Stephane G. Vahoua
Mara Koss
Ellis Dominique Davie
Ashenaq F. Gelaw
Norman Anthony Kimbrough
Stephanie Doyle
Justin Singleton
Ed Rummel
Lauren Nichelson
Chris Rummel
Desiree Michelle Lee
Jordan Buchanan
Chandra Dhungel
Tony Briscoe
Mahatani Yusuf

Success

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Bethany and Noah posed with a friend at a photo studio shoot.

recording her tale in print. But it was cathartic, and it’s since helped her become more even-keeled when touching upon the many hurtful aspects of her past.

Once Rittenhouse leaves campus, it’s back home to see Noah. She looks at him and sees “just love and happiness,” qualities that were in short supply during her lost decade.

Rittenhouse explained that she isn’t sure if she’ll recount her life story to Noah in the future. She thinks that maybe when he’s an adult, he has a right to know he has other half-siblings in this world.

“But I am going to make sure he knows that I did go through hard times and he was the person that brought me out of it,” she said. “Because he was, and he still is.”

She can look into Noah’s blue eyes today and see the possibilities, for both of them. And along the way, Rittenhouse has been able to use the painful experiences she faced to counsel others dealing with the fallout from drugs and violence.

Rittenhouse said she’s lucky. Drugs no longer tempt her, though she added that she’ll sometimes deal with triggers that take her back to the off-spring she left behind.

The good news is there have been breakthroughs on that front within the last six months. The legal guardian of her two children has begun sending pictures within the last six months, which marks the first time she’s seen their faces since they were little.

Perhaps it will lead to something more in the future. A talk. A visit.

Rittenhouse is preaching patience on those possibilities.

For now, she’ll have to make due with three-year-old Noah, and he provides plenty. There’s a certain joy that even comes with mom’s homework—when accompanies by a little boy’s smile.

“Even when I’m having a hard day and miss my family I can’t be sad when I’m with him,” she said. “I just can’t just look at his little face and he’s so kind-hearted. If he can hear my voice break, it’s, ‘Mommy, what’s wrong?’ He comes over and takes his little chubby hands and grabs my face and says, ‘I love you more than anything in the world.’”

Rock bottom doesn’t stand a chance against that type of filler material.
Knowing the How and Whye

Diana Whye came to CCA in 2005 having inherited a piecemeal organization that wasn’t where it should be for an organization of its size. She departs at the end of December with the Foundation having: tripled the money allotted to scholarships since joining the college – up to $600,000 over the last year; built the Foundation staff to four full-time members; helped spearhead the Transforming Lowry, Transforming Lives campaign for the last three years; and markedly increased the visibility of the organization within the community.

“When I announced my decision to step down, I honestly didn’t feel that I had accomplished that much,” Whye said in a recent interview in her CentreTech office. “It wasn’t until people started coming up to me and telling me, ‘My gosh, you were the architect of this organization,’ and ‘If it wasn’t for you, we wouldn’t be where we are today,’ that I really stopped to think that maybe I did have an impact. But because of who I am, I never saw that.”

Whye has worked diligently to put herself front and center as the face of the CCA Foundation and that hard work has, to many college stakeholders, made her the point person for the community at large.

At the same time, “She constantly brings it back to the students and what we’re trying to do for students,” said Brenda Williams Granger, a member of the Foundation Executive Board and its incoming secretary.

The positions at the Foundation before Whye arrived at CCA were in a state of flux. Years earlier, Susan Miller had been hired full-time to oversee fundraising to build the Student Centre. Interim and acting directors then filled the gap before Whye became executive director after having worked at Metro State College of Denver the previous decade.

The opportunity to put a personal stamp in the full-time seat at CCA trumped her interim executive director’s role at Metro.

“It was basically a startup position and I could take the position and mold it into whatever it was I thought would make the most sense for the Foundation and the college,” she said. “That was pretty appealing.”

Whye upon her arrival sat down with then-President Linda Bowman and Foundation Board representatives. They talked about wanting to move the organization forward into a full-time, fundraising arm.

Ostensibly, the Foundation’s key role at the time was as landlord for the college’s buildings as well as a voice in the community to build awareness about the college.

Yet there had only been one capital fundraising drive to date when Whye arrived. The Partnership for Excellence campaign in the late 1980s raised $1 million was largely used for the Student Centre construction.

“The first thing I had to do when I came on board was to establish policies and guidelines, because a lot of those were non-existent,” Whye said. “Systems needed to be put in place. Accounting had been parceled out to a part-time accountant. So, really, bringing the structures and processes where they needed to be was a full-time job, initially.”

A couple of early tasks were put on Whye’s plate, too.

The college was in the midst of its Advancing Our Community Together (ACT) campaign and Whye was responsible for securing about half of the $2.5 million eventually raised to support programs and scholarships.

She also needed to become assimilated into the Aurora community as front person for the Foundation. Whye joined the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary and went through Leadership Aurora, among other moves, to better understand the movers and shakers in local business, government and within other civic arenas.
It was also time to start hiring people to support Whye. The part-time accountant and scholarship coordinator were in place but the goal was to grow the Foundation internally. It was particularly important to bring the financial piece in-house, Whye explained, in order to be more accountable to donors. Kacee Austin was the first full-time staffer under Whye.

One of the first projects Whye initiated was attempting to strengthen the Foundation Board and teach them their fundraising responsibilities. Some were uncomfortable with that notion of soliciting donors and opted to step down.

"Starting from scratch is both a blessing and a curse," Whye said of her start at CCA. "Because when you're starting from scratch you can really implement your own vision. But when you're coming from an environment where there were people to do everything and now, all of a sudden, you are wearing all the hats, it can be extremely challenging and stressful."

But that student-centric piece invariably pushed her forward.

One of Whye's proudest accomplishments is the growth of the annual Scholarship Luncheon. That event is held at a metropolitan hotel and kicks off with a parade of students toting the flags of their native countries. Many of the success stories of this diverse group are highlighted, as are some of the benchmark programs that are CCA's fabric.

Over $500,000 has been raised since expanding the luncheon in '06.

"The first year I came here, that luncheon was basically a spaghetti dinner held in the Rotunda and the donors were invited to come together and meet with their scholarship recipients," Whye recalled. "A board member said, 'Boy it sure would be nice if we could move this event to a hotel,' and I said, 'And make money in the process.' And so that was the first year we held it at a hotel and we made $50,000."

Whye theorized that expanding the luncheon may have removed some intimacy between the donors and the students they support, but, in a broader sense, the reach has "expanded exponentially, so it's a tradeoff."

And make no mistake, Growth has been an integral part of Whye's tenure as executive director.

Clockwise from left: Diana Whye in public, at the Foundation Scholarship Luncheon in 2013, shortly upon joining the college in '05.

Whye will leave to her successor is the Transforming Lowry, Transforming Lives – or TL2 – campaign. Phase One included the construction of a $1.4 million campus entryway. Phase Two is ongoing.

It's with a mixture of sadness and optimism that Whye steps aside from that endeavor. Leadership changes at the college have contributed to a slowdown that she sees ramping up "once all the positions are settled."

And, she admitted, that bringing in a new person in her chair might also hasten that progress.

"It's time to turn it over to somebody who may have a different view, a different perspective, different training, different knowledge, different excitement, different enthusiasm, someone who can really come here and shake things up," she said of her imminent departure.

Getting to the point of no return was not an easy one for Whye. She joked that "like a poker player, everybody's got to know when to hold and when to fold." But her decision to resign at year's end was no laughing matter.

It was influenced heavily by family concerns. Her mother moved in with her following Superstorm Sandy and "that really made me see things with different eyes, to see what's really important to me … I opted for mom."

She almost stayed with the status quo, even though she thought about a new beginning for a while. The day she sent an email announcing her resignation, Whye paced around the office with the message in her send queue. But she hesitated hitting the button several times because she remains so passionate about the organization and the students. Finally, she closed her eyes and hit the button, a move she knew brought with it some finality.

"I think Diana can do whatever she chooses to do," Williams Granger said. "She's very organized. She's really good with people. She has excellent people skills. She finds out about people and what the person's interest is and what the person can bring to the organization. … And as she's making her own transition, she shouldn't leave without realizing the value she has brought to (CCA)."

Whye remains completely open-minded about her next move. She would like to remain in education, but not necessarily in higher ed. It may have a teaching component, since she fervently believes that passing on knowledge can contribute to fixing some of the world's problems.

"I know there's something bigger and better in store for me," Whye said. "I don't know what it is or where it is, but it's going to be fun."
Oudenhoven named full-time president

The Colorado Community College System and its president, Dr. Nancy McCollin, announced Dec. 3 that Dr. Betsy Oudenhoven, has been appointed permanent president of CCA, effective immediately.

In a prepared statement, Dr. McCollin cited Oudenhoven’s work and community presence as factors in removing the interim tag that Oudenhoven had worked under since late July.

“She will provide solid leadership for the college as we move forward,” McCollin said. “In both of her positions as vice president of student affairs at CCA and as the college interim president, she has demonstrated she has the skills and commitment to take on this role.”

Oudenhoven during her brief tenure as interim already has made a considerable impact on the college’s campuses and in the community.

She initiated strategic planning committees that will help shape CCA’s mission and vision for the next five years.

Oudenhoven hosted monthly All-College Forums that addressed issues directly affecting the college, including the strategic plan, Equity in Excellence (which aims to better accommodate underserved portions of the student body), and CCA’s role in the community.

Oudenhoven herself has attempted to expand the college’s reach within Aurora by re-energizing CCA’s relationship with the Chamber of Commerce and its various committees and by speaking to various groups, including the American Association of University Women and the American Management Institute.

Oudenhoven during her interim tenure also completed her stint in Leadership Aurora, with civic, educational and business heavyweights.

“I am honored to be appointed the next president of the Community College of Aurora,” Oudenhoven said in the CCCS news release.

“I want to thank all of the individuals who have stepped up and worked hard during this transition to make sure that we have continued to serve our students to the best of our ability.

“The opportunity to serve as the interim president of CCA over these past five months has affirmed my faith in this institution and my pride in our wonderful faculty and staff, our inspiring students, and our generous and committed Foundation board members and community partners. CCA has a bright future and I am incredibly lucky to be a part of it.”
CCA student Paula Richard means business as she changes her life’s trajectory and is finally getting her ...

**JUST DESSERTS**

Baking got a rise out of Paula Richard for many years, not the other way around. Experiments in dough were replete with woe. A lopsided cake here. A lopsided cake there.

Her culinary coach — young grandson Kaleo — wouldn’t let her get down, even as these failures in years spanned to nearly a half-dozen.

Early on, Kaleo would say things like, “No, Grandma…” or “Doesn’t taste good…”

He even uttered, “Bad, Grandma,” after some taste tests.

Undeterred, Richard kept at it, keeping her cool with the oven humming 350 degrees. She did so, in part, by focusing on one of little Kaleo’s favorite slogans, which accentuated the positive:

“Try again. Try again. Try again.”

She did, and now, Richard owns a small pastry business that she runs out of her home, called, to no one’s surprise, ‘Kaleo’s Kitchen.’

It’s a start-up. Richard bakes “when the spirit moves me,” something that is happening less frequently while aggressively pursuing a degree at age 49 at Community College of Aurora.

Her first large-scale public venture in the baking world will be as a vendor at the Small Business BIG IMPACT Expo at the Adams County Fairgrounds in Brighton on Dec. 14.

It’s exciting and scary for Richard, but she says, “I’m delighted to be doing it.”

And, like many of the pursuits that have filled her nearly five decades, it took dogged perseverance to get to that high-minded state.

Try again? Richard doesn’t know where she would be without doing just that, not just in baking, but in life.

She once was a teen mom, lost in the world after her mother’s death. Back then, she didn’t even know how to pay a bill, much less be a mom on her own. The chain reaction was a common one: drugs, bad crowds. But Shayla, that little girl she had as a little girl, and the love of her sister, aunt and others pulled her through that, and worse to come.

Dog tired after 15 years as a Certified Nursing Assistant, Richard searched for a new path in 2003 by enrolling at CCA for the first time. She had a Criminal Justice degree in mind. Yet life, once again, got in the way.

Her young son, now 15, took her to hell and back. She was with him every step of the way, attempting to change a path of inexplicable, out-of-control behavior. He would run off. Set things on fire. Hit other children in class.

Richard ended her scholarly pursuits cold turkey to seek answers and deal with the fallout. It went on this way for more than 10 years.

“You know how they say it takes a village to raise a child?” Richard asked. “It’s taken a whole city to raise that kid.”

Her son was later diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). He’s now attending Montbello High School and doing much better with medication, therapy, and knowledge about the illness. It also took the help of Paula’s older sister Pam and an aunt, but Richard endured.

“We lost a lot of stuff, material things, because I didn’t have a job and had to end up selling things to make ends meet. We had to relocate. There were a lot of painful things that transpired out of it, but in the long run, it was worth it, because he’s a pretty healthy kid these days.”

Richard herself has a pretty healthy outlook these days, too.

With her home life having calmed down—daughter Shayla is pursuing a singing career after graduating from the University of Denver — she recently re-enrolled at CCA for a second time and credits the business courses she’s taken for helping her start Kaleo’s Kitchen.

“First of all, CCA just embraced me,” Richard explained. “They weren’t biased, prejudiced or any of those negative things. They welcomed me, and they allowed me to learn. The business classes I take, I learned how to do a business plan and establish Kaleo’s. Those classes are why I have a business. I don’t think if it was for my instructors I would have come this far. They have helped me so much.”

The long-term future for Richard’s small business is uncertain as she concentrates mainly on academics.

“I like being in the kitchen, making things taste good,” she said.

On the other hand, she added with a laugh that meeting her degree goals would pull her even with daughter Shayla, which is something that’s important to her on a competitive level.

“My mind is more focused than I’ve ever been in my life and there’s nothing that can pull that focus,” Richard said. “Nothing.”

Even if she happens to stumble along the way, it’s a surefire bet that she’ll keep Kaleo’s advice in her heart and try again.

Simply, she’ll, try, try again.


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“She just doesn’t give up. She wants her college degree and she wants to graduate from CCA so badly that she’s willing to do anything to get there. She’s already survived in life. And now, she’s at this point, and she’s still a fighter.”

--- TRiO advisor Eileen Blasius

Paula Richard’s path to CCA has been replete with numerous potholes, but her journey through college has to date been marked by a fierce determination.
CCA hosted the annual CESDA Symposium on Nov. 15, and area high schools Rangeview, Central and Grandview were in attendance, along with several Douglas County CESDA institutions. The conference’s purpose was to expose students to college culture and gain a sense of campus life by meeting students, faculty and staff. Among those heavily involved with the project (clockwise from top) were: Jill Szynskie, Angele Davenport, Kyla Doddridge, Elena Sandoval-Lucero, and Gabe Fischer.
Dr. Jennifer Hoffman of the University of Denver likely had a segment of the attendees at the bi-annual Sherlin Lecture hooked simply by the title of her presentation: “Real-Life Death Stars: Why Supernova Explosions are Even Weirder Than You Think.”

But when she began her Nov. 20 speech at CentreTech’s Fine Arts Forum by linking her work on supernova explosions to CGI images from the climactic scene from “Star Wars,” she seemed to grab hold of their attention just a little tighter. And, by the time she was finished, the audience learned from Dr. Hoffman that truth wasn’t necessarily stranger than fiction, but that a restored version of the sci-fi classic — which added a ring-shaped explosion for dramatic purposes — actually mirrored the science that’s been accumulated of such similar events in real galaxy, far, far away.

The study of polarization of light and computer modeling linking observations and theories have shown that supernovae aren’t in fact round but emit an oval-shaped band of energy after exploding. But the study of the core-collapse of a supernova that ends a star’s life has benefits that reach well beyond CGI comparisons. They help us understand how stars live and die. They create new elements that are distributed through space and affect their galactic neighborhoods by creating large-scale shock waves. And, perhaps most important, they help us map the universe.

“We are not lab scientists. That’s kind of the weird thing about Astronomy and unusual among the sciences,” Dr. Hoffman explained. “Because we can’t do lab experiments. I can’t bring a supernova to my lab and I can’t go there to study it, so I have to use computational techniques to help me understand my observations.”

One of the main tools employed by Dr. Hoffman is studying waves of light that are polarized. Light is made up of oscillating electric and magnetic fields; if the electric fields in a beam of light have no preferred direction then the beam is unpolarized. Seen from afar, a star looks like a point source. When polarized, electric field vectors are forced to align or partially align in some given direction instead of all directions.

A round scattering region completely cancels the vectors and gives you no polarization; non-round scattered regions won’t cancel the vectors and will produce a net polarization signal that can be measured by instruments. That technique allowed scientists to realize that supernovae aren’t, in fact, round since they were able to measure that polarization. The orientation of these polarization vectors is directly related to the orientation of the scattering region.

“So not only can you tell the something is not round, you can tell the direction it is not round, so it’s like being able to see (the shape of an exploded supernova) even if you can’t. We’re so far away from these supernovae, we don’t know what they look like. All we can do is receive the light. But if we measure the polarization of the light we can tell something about the orientation of the scattering region on the sky. So it’s a very powerful technique that allows us to learn something about these faraway objects.”

Dr. Hoffman then explained several potential reasons supernovae may not be round. Binary stars (orbiting each other) travel in one direction but not the other. It could be that like Earth, the star may not be perfectly round but have a bulged middle that gets more pronounced upon explosion.

The star may be “clumpy,” with areas more dense than others, creating a difference in the way light scatters. The nature of the explosion itself may not be asymmetrical, or the “ejecta” from the supernova must also pass through circumstellar, or disk-like, material, affecting the way light is dispersed.

Computer modeling then matches code to such observations, and in large part by using the Monte Carlo Method, random number generators reproduce the physical behavior of virtual photons to predict supernova’s end cycle.

What’s been learned through the study of numerous supernovae is that in the first 100 days, the star is essentially a fireball, round and opaque, that is giving off a constant brightness. At some point, the explosive materials run out and as it expands, it begins to thin out and become transparent. The very core is revealed to be non-spherical or elongated with a ring or disc structure around it.

So, in other words, supernovae are something akin to an exploding Hollywood death star.

“These are rare stars,” Dr. Miller said. “And the more massive you get, the rarer you get.”
The Little Prince

The play in pictures

Members of the cast of "The Little Prince" during its 10-day November run at the Black Box Theater, included, upper left to right, Keller Nunley, Kristen Johannesen; Jen Stone, Emily Peterson Wood and Marisa Thomas (as the snake); James Brunt; middle, Nick Martinez; bottom left to right: Marisa Thomas, Daniel Isaacs, Meghan Johnson.
HAZMAT SUITS HIM JUST FINE

Mark Stephenson has specialized in hazardous materials mitigation on and off during 34 years serving the Aurora Fire Department. And while he hasn't seen it all, he's seen plenty in that role.

There was the time a tanker truck full of liquid oxygen was pinned under the Mississippi Ave. overpass on Interstate 225. He experienced red, fuming nitric acid emanating from a punctured railroad car near Interstate 70 and Pecos. He's seen radioactive packages fall off delivery trucks, dealt with sulfuric acid spills into river water and anthrax threats, among other real-life emergencies.

Yet, despite the danger, it is a facet of his career that he embraces wholeheartedly.

“I like the fact that it was more than just mechanical skills and a total contrast from many emergencies in the fire service where you had to mitigate things very, very quickly,” said Stephenson, now CCA’s coordinator of Fire Science Technology program and a battalion chief for AFD. “HazMat is a totally different flavor.”

In 2002, that flavor had a decidedly Far Eastern essence.

Stephenson’s training has taken him all over the United States and even to Israel, where he witnessed a SWAT team overtake terrorists holding hostages on a city bus. But one of his most memorable excursions came about a decade ago, when he and a partner were sent to Hong Kong to give its executive team training in hazardous materials it could then pass along to a 10,000-member force.

The assimilation of information, and the caution needed each step of the way in HazMat vs. other calls was one area imparted. Other ideas put forth were even more basic.

“They had some of the newest technology,” Stephenson recalled. “But they really didn’t enforce codes anywhere near our level, just on basic fire codes. Some fire trucks couldn’t navigate streets because of merchants encroaching. I saw bare wire at apartment buildings where anybody could walk up and get electrocuted. There were bare wires on poles, so there certainly was a lot of contrast. The wealth was palpable. You could tell it was a wealthy city. But then there was a lack of placarding or labeling on shipments from overseas. So it was a paradox in a way.”

Stephenson and Kevin Hammonds, a former AFD leader, who once taught fire-origin classes at CCA, were charged with melding the modern with the antiquated to help Hong Kong Fire Dept. work more efficiently.

One methodology to which Stephenson and Co. introduced the Chinese was the common practices spelled out in the United Nations Emergency Response Guide Book – which is evident here via placards on trucks and trains in this country. It’s a succinct, North American system with easily accessible information about emergency management.

“It was very rewarding and I think it shows the benefit of education,” Stephenson said of the two-week trip. “Here they didn’t think they had any problems and someone coming over from Aurora, Colorado – a small city fire department – and they were very open and eager to learn.”

That passing of knowledge was reciprocated in many ways. Stephenson saw how some of the small Hong Kong islands needed miniaturized equipment to navigate what were essentially paths instead of paved roads. He even got to work a $40 million, high-tech fireboat.

These are the type of experiences Stephenson and many of the faculty in the department brings to CCA students. “If the students know you’re a practitioner of whatever you’re teaching, that it’s real-world application, I think it resonates better with them.”

In Hong Kong, similarities existed in response to emergencies, though some practices are more parochial. Stephenson watched Hong Kong fire units that had been raised as a former British Colony but also were steeped in Communist culture work in almost paramilitary fashion. When one shift relieved another, they would march out in full dress uniform and salute the departing unit, then fold its flag.

Stephenson laughed as he thought how that might fly with the Aurora firefighters he will continue to oversee before retiring in February.

At the same time, “Anytime you can encounter other people, other cultures, and broaden your horizons and understanding, you come away all the richer for it,” Stephenson said.

And, he added, that in a larger sense such experiences neatly tie into the college’s philosophy of lifelong learning. Hong Kong was hopefully better prepared to mitigate issues due to he and his partner’s help.

And as for Stephenson, eating fish bladder and staring back at a bird with its head still affixed and served on a silver platter, these were moments he’ll not soon forget along with providing that training all those miles away.
Information bank

All-College meeting focuses on disability issues

The November All-Campus Forum focused on disability issues, including handling potential barriers to higher education, discussing protections afforded this segment of the employee and student population, and clarifying the laws under which the college operates.

The impact of the expansion of the American Disabilities Act and sections 504 and 508 relating to civil rights, assistive technology and access were among the points clarified to a large audience assembled in the Bergren Room at Lowry.

Additions to ADA law nationally, “broadened the scope of what could be considered disabilities,” Director of Human Resources Cindy Hesse explained. “So in a sense with my job, it isn’t defining whether someone has a disability … but what we really focus on now is, can we accommodate that disability and help this person be successful?”

Director of Accessibility Services Steven Zeeh talked about accommodations for students with disabilities having a sum effect of creating opportunities to be on an equal level with all students, not creating an advantage over the bulk of the population.

“For our office, our responsibility is to provide those accommodations and respond in a timely manner. That’s not just something we want to do but bound by our laws.”

Mary Graham, manager of instructional support and FLAC, reminds all regular faculty and adjuncts that all outstanding supplementary pay forms for fall semester need to be submitted to their departments no later than Dec. 16.

The forms need to be routed through department administrators as an initial step. Non- or delayed submission of these supplementary pay forms will push processing until after the first Spring semester payday, meaning a payment delay of nearly two months, from Jan. 10 to March 7.

CCA will host two meetings for external stakeholders interested in participating in the college’s ongoing strategic planning process. The initial session will take place Dec. 5 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. in the Bergren Room at Lowry. The second session is slated for 7:30-8:30 a.m. Dec. 18 in the CentreTech Rotunda.

Employees interested in volunteering at either session to assist during roundtable discussions or recording feedback from participants are urged to call Barbara Lindsay, director of career services, at 303-360-4914.

Employees are encouraged to alert family and friends about the Second Annual Holiday Silent Auction held by CCA Foundation to support the Transforming Lowry, Transforming Lives campaign. The event began Dec. 2 and will run through Dec. 13th. Items up for bid include hotel giveaways, gift cards, gift baskets, artwork and more. For more information on the items for bid, please visit: www.tinyurl.com/CCAFoundationAuction.

The annual holiday party will be held Monday, Dec. 16, at 5:30 p.m. Family and friends of CCA employees are invited. Service awards marking employment for five years through 30-plus years, and 35 years will be part of the festivities, as will the announcement of Employees of the Year. Coat check will be available and donations toward the Transforming Lowry, Transforming Lives campaign will be accepted.

Michael Manaton, department chair in the business department, has accepted an opportunity outside of the college and will return to his former role as an adjunct.

Virginia Krazas will replace Manaton as interim department chair.

Manaton has been a valuable member of the college faculty and leadership over the past three years. Dean of Academic Affairs for the School of Professional Studies and Sciences Victor Vialpando said Manaton “elevated the standard of quality in the department.”

Manaton was slated to teach the remainder of his fall campus but his last day on campus was Nov. 26.

The Colorado Community College System traveled to all 13 member institutions in order to shoot branding videos that will be launched in January. Selected faculty, students and other stakeholders from CCA were interviewed in the project, which promotes community college but not this institution specifically.

Those interested in getting a sneak peak at the work done by Educational Marketing Group on behalf of CCCC please click on the following links: Career Ready Skills, Academic Excellence; Student Life; and Technology and Partnerships.

A special thanks is due to Christopher Tombari, Stacey D’Angelo, Wagner Power Equipment Co., Blessed Otabil, and Maria Garibay Campos for their participation in CCA’s video shoot.

Ted Snow, dean of academic affairs, announced the hiring of Mary Hajner in the role of TAA Grant and Data Coordinator. Hajner will serve in that capacity through the end of the grant period in September 2014.

Hajner takes over the grant-management responsibilities formerly handled by Ashley Moorehead, former ACE department chair. She will oversee the administration of the TAA grant and the collection and reporting of data required by the CCCS and U.S. Department of Labor.

Hajner previously worked as a Quality Assurance Supervisor at Denver Health and as Quality Analyst at Value Options in Colorado Springs.

Purchasing Coordinator Kathy Bodemann reminds employees that CCA Organizational Guidelines are posted on the MyCCA portal. Among the topics covered are state rules, regulations and procedures, finance, human resources, institutional issues, instruction, and student affairs.

Dave Riley started at CCA on November 11 in a new position as Grant Management Coordinator. In this role, Riley will provide support to faculty and other CCA staff who are managing grant project implementation, including providing grant management training and how-to resources, assisting with grant narrative and financial reports, and general grant-related troubleshooting as needed. Among other responsibilities.

Departments that use CCA-issued laptops need to bring them to the IT Helpdesk at CentreTech or to Glen Murphy in 859-105 at Lowry for virus updates. The laptops likely will needed overnight. Employees will be notified by phone or email when their laptop(s) are ready. Please bring an AC power charger when dropping off computers. For more information, call IT Support at 303-360-4900.

The CCA Student Process Exhibition is ongoing through Dec. 9 at the Donna Moravec Gallery. The show features highlights of student work created in studio classes encompassing 2D, 3D and digital work that highlight idea, concept, and process over the finished result. For info and gallery hours, call 303-340-7335.

The Foundation for Colorado Community Colleges announced that the Stone Family Foundation is offering scholarships to students at any of the 13 CCCS institutions during the 2014 spring semester. Deadline for application is Dec. 20 at 5 p.m. Documents will be posted at www.cccs.edu/foundation.

Some of the major events on campus during the month of December include Stress Management presentations on Dec. 4-5; the Student Success Awards on Dec. 6 at the Rotunda and various club meetings hosted by ISA/IMA, SSMVC, Film Fans, SGA and the PTK Executive meeting. Please check the CCA events calendar on the college home page for dates and times.

Jayson Birmingham won a silver and the fledging program’s first-ever gold medal at the Rocky Mountain Collegiate Taekwondo League fall championships Nov. 2 at the University of Northern Colorado as part of CCA’s inaugural competitive tournament.

Birmingham won his gold in sudden death in the Men’s C Team Featherweight division. His silver came in Men’s White/ Yellow forms. Fellow CCA student Damien Brown won bronze in the event. Brown also lost in overtime to earn silver in the Men’s C Team Welterweight Division.

Satyaj Wimbish also captured gold in Women’s C Team Featherweight, competing under the guidance of Master Bill Pottle.
Clockwise from top, two of the 26 Overland High School/Institute of Technology students participating in STEM workshops as part of an Xcel Energy camp at Lowry; affixing a memorial band for a soldier during Veterans Day ceremonies at the Rotunda; Azaria Trowell, grandson of Alisa Trowell, employment developer in the Center for Workforce Development, shows off his balloon - and a Halloween costume; William Banks and his son Logan pose for a candid shot during the Fall Festival; Satya Wimbish, Bill Pottle, Damien Brown and Jayson Birmingham pose after the Rocky Mountain Collegiate Taekwondo League fall championships Nov. 2 as part of CCA’s inaugural competitive tournament.

Photo courtesy Katie Yvars, School Assessment Coordinator, Overland High School