The Formative Years

InterCom
July 2013 Newsletter

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THE HISTORY OF CCA: FIRST IN A FOUR-PART SERIES

REGULAR MONTHLY COVERAGE BEGINS PAGE 14

Petitions Circulate On College

Chances for College In Aurora Seem Good

Ellin Mrachek: Aurora Center is best news yet

Committee crushes Aurora college bill
“At this point in time ... Aurora has been told that if it wants a community college it’s impossible. But as long as Aurora has people who dream of better things, it may be difficult but not impossible.”

Ellin Mrachek, an early pioneer in the founding of Community College of Aurora, wrote those words in August 1979. Less than five years later, on May 20, 1983, legislation was passed that, on paper, created the institution that today celebrates its 30th birthday.

But what is perhaps little known to many residents and even inside CCA is there were more than three decades of struggle that preceded the college’s legal formation. Efforts trace back to newspaper publisher Olen L. Bell in the early 1950s and continued through a few highs but numerous lows until Gov. Dick Lamm put pen to paper on Senate Bill No. 170, and beyond.

The college has since established itself as a hallmark of the community, with 12,786 students registering for the 2012-13 school year, according to college records.

In the next four issues of InterCom, the history of the institution will be chronicled, through newspaper accounts, historical study and numerous interviews with those who were on the front lines of the battle and, finally, on campus at CentreTech and Lowry.

Difficulties and dreams are guaranteed to be included.

-- Lee Rasizer, CCA Public Relations Coordinator
1950: Olen L. Bell, publisher of the Aurora Advocate, and Roy Van Dyke, editor, spearheaded the first efforts for tax-supported a junior college district designed to take advantage of post World War II growth that would fill a void where there was no two-year public higher education institutions and limited post-secondary vocational-technical education. Bell would use his newspaper over the years to stimulate interest in the idea and secure legislative action. His longstanding efforts eventually culminated in the establishment of the Aurora Education Center, which was a major development toward the creation of a separate state college.

1958: Bell enlisted the help of William B. Mansfield, as part of the Aurora Committee for the Western Arapahoe County Community College, whose goal was to carve out a junior college district that encompassed a large section of central and eastern Arapahoe and Adams Counties. The group gathered community support, including a petition drive, but was drubbed at the polls.

1960s

proponent of open enrollment and vocational/technical education, began working on an independent Aurora college.

1963: Ellin Mrachek, a civic leader voted to the Aurora Board of Education and a member of Aurora's CentreTech campus opening of Community College in 1991. He died on Christmas Eve three years later at age 81.

BELL MADE SURE CITY HAD READ ON SITUATION

Olen L. Bell used his newspaper like a bully pulpit when it came to the potential establishment of a community college for Aurora, tracing as far back as the Korean War.

In some respects, the former editor of the Aurora Advocate (later the Sentinel) was the father of the movement, steadily bringing others along with him and staying active in the fray for almost five decades.

Bell printed articles and editorials in support of higher education in Aurora that date back to at least 1950 when petitions were gathered, and later, led the charge for a junior college district that would not only serve his town but also Englewood, Littleton, Cherry Creek and Sheridan.

His involvement moving forward meant roles as the Chairman of the Legislative Action Task Force's General Advisory Committee for the Aurora Education Center (AEC) – which pre-dated CCAs legal formation in 1983 – and the advisory committee for what was then dubbed the "Aurora Community College Center" in ’82.

Bell’s motives may not have been completely charitable. He was a businessman, after all, and Aurora getting an independent college couldn’t hurt. But it went far beyond that potential side benefit.

Aurora was a small but gaining population starting in the ’50s. Later, the local public schools and Pickens Technical College didn’t offer college credit. If business was to relocate, potential incentives were needed. Bell also knew the value of an education and strongly believed its citizens deserved that benefit.

Jim Lewien, president and CEO of Commerce Bank, served with Bell on several committees – including CCA’s Presidential Advisory Council and the GAC -- and recalled asking him after one particular meeting about his longstanding motives.

“He said, ‘You know, I just really felt there was a need here. Aurora was a city that was growing and was going to continue to grow and the need would continue to grow,’” Lewien recalled.

“Just really felt there was an absolute need. Olie was a hometown guy and an old-time journalist, and boy, if he felt something was right, he’d tell it like it is. He was an absolute bulldog. He was a very nice man, but he could look you straight in the eye and say, ‘You’re wrong, and I’m going to prove it.”’ Lewien recalled.

Bell’s early vision – buttressed in the 1950s by support by Advocate editor Roy Van Dyke and mayor William Mansfield, and later, local education icon Ellin Mracheck and his wife, Mary – did prove correct in the long view.

“He was grinning ear to ear when we got it done,” Lewien remembered.

This article from the Aurora Advocate pre-dates election on the establishment of a community college in the 1950s but was typical of the support the newspaper devoted to the cause.
Aurora resident Bill Murray Jr. remembers Ellin Mrachek’s son, Bill, once telling him he was the original “latch-key kid” back in the 1950s.

“Because any time he wanted Ellin, you had to call her at 6 a.m. She was gone the rest of the day because she was involved in so many things.”

Mrachek settled in on Joliet Street in the ’50s and steadily went to work on multiple causes. She joined Aurora Advocate publisher Olen Bell’s fledging efforts to obtain a community college when she joined the Board of Education in 1963 and kept at it relentlessly.

She eventually took the fight to the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education as one of its members and part of the General Advisory Committee that was integral in CCA’s creation.

“Ellin, by far, carried the water. She should get a lot of credit – get the most credit really, but supported by Olie Bell as far as the newspaper was concerned,” said Ruth Fountain, Mrachek’s friend since the 1960s and a compatriot on many issues.

Mrachek, who passed away in 2001, also was a driving force behind Aurora’s vocational-technical center and mental-health facility. She founded a local chapter of the American Association of University Women, where she met many fellow supporters that shed convert to action.

“It was all about Aurora,” said Sharon Powers, Mrachek’s friend and an Aurora Mental Health Center employee for three years when Mrachek chaired the board. Like Bell, Mrachek saw a population boom and a need for a community college.

Yet, when change didn’t occur fast enough, she spearheaded the Aurora Outreach Program in the early 1970s to at least provide a local option for those seeking classes. The grass-roots initiative became Aurora Education Center and later morphed into the establishment of CCA.

“My mom was a wife, mother and volunteer,” daughter Lin Mrachek said. “But being a volunteer to my mother was a big deal. It was where she was able to make things happen.”

One of her strengths was an ability to bring people with opposing views together and find big-picture answers to parochial issues. “It was just her vision,” her daughter added. “She could see what was needed.”

Women’s issues and educational causes were particularly important.

“When I first came here to teach, I thought Aurora was a bedroom community and Denver had everything,” said Ruth Whitmore, a Mrachek friend since 1958. “She wanted Aurora to have things not all go to downtown Denver.”

**Early 1970s**

**1970:** A bond issue was unnecessary to retain the rights to the Buckley land. Voters in March approved an $11.7 million bond outlay. Set aside was $1.5 million to build the first phase of the Vo-Tech Center but the vocational division of SBCCOE insisted Aurora lacked an “area school designation.” The inaction prompted a consortium of school board members, several Vo-Tech centers, architects and local coordinator Bud Johnson to come up with an alternate plan.

**1971:** Ground broken on Vo-Tech Center, which was completed in the fall of 1972. Mrachek’s dissatisfaction with the earlier decision to leave Aurora out of the community college mix prompted a decision to create the Aurora Outreach program.

**1972:** William C Hinckley HS hosted the Aurora Outreach Program, with courses offered through the Community College of Denver. The original student body was 41. Classes were often cancelled due to lack of supervision and the failure to appear by instructors. Phase I of the Aurora Tech Center opens with 17 programs in a 65,931 square foot building.

**1973:** Aurora Outreach Program had no facilities, no resources. Schedules were typed and circulated. Registration for six classes was announced in the local newspaper. Marline McCracken took over organizational efforts as part-time coordinator and would field calls from prospective students at her kitchen table/office. Aurora Technical Center later donated office space for McCracken.

**1975:** Despite rising enrollment in the outreach classes, advertised classes were sometimes cancelled or shifted to the CCD-Auraria Campus. A college committee discussed an alignment with Arapahoe Community College or Metro State out of desperation. Meanwhile, Phase II was completed on Aurora Tech Center at East Park Plaza, on Sixth and Chambers, increasing the instructional space to 160,000 feet.

**1976:** McCracken enlisted the help of her friend and marketing specialist Gwen Thayer. The pair went to Aurora Mall and supermarkets to publicize and advertise and from there got several enrollees. A committee of 20 Aurora citizens helped develop a plan for a community college in Aurora. The Colorado State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education supported the development of a Aurora community college in Aurora “to meet the post-secondary needs of citizens who desire to gain college credit” in November.

**1977:** On March 29, House Bill 1522, or the “Aurora Community College bill” was introduced by Rep. Gerard V. Frank but was effectively killed by the Education Committee and action indefinitely postponed for the year. Yet it was the first time that the “facts about the urgent need for the new school” had been presented to a legislative committee. Frank held out hope that over the next several months that the proposal could be incorporated into a forthcoming Colorado Commission on Higher Education master plan and get gubernatorial support. Frank did manage to secure separate “FTE” funding for Aurora students.
1978: The Colorado Commission on Higher Education recommended that no new community colleges be established during the 1978-83 planning period. Mrachek and other local community leaders attempted to convince CCHE that the needs of Aurora citizens were not being met at a two-hour public hearing. But a college for Aurora was not a priority in the master plan. However, short-range and long-range planning committees for Aurora were established at the Commission’s behest. At this time, enrollment at Aurora Outreach Center had exceeded 600 students, classes were too full, and students wanted classes available in their neighborhoods so offerings were expanded by three locales: St. Stephen Protomartyr Episcopal Church on Lowry Air Force Base; Fitzsimmons Army Center, Building 619, and the Emporia Building (1400 North). Bill Fielden and Frances Hill are hired as work-study students at Aurora Outreach Program.

1979: Aurora City Council recommended that the old City Hall be used for the Aurora Education Center as part of the short-range plan but the old police/fire/court building at 16th and Elmira became available and could accommodate classes, both day and night, in one location. The city pitched in $10,000 for renovations. It doubled the classes and provided more comprehensive education. In total, 60 classes were offered with 712 students enrolled. With the move, Dr. Nai-Kwang Chang became the new director, with Katie Smolka serving as his secretary. When he arrived, there was an empty old building with no offices and no classes going on. There was no furniture or counter to register people A week before opening classes at the old police building. Community College of Denver provided little support and a small budget. There was no money to purchase textbooks, no library, no money to hire help. Aurora Education was getting 30 cents on the dollar in college budget. AEC used almost all part-time help to start. The principal purpose of AEC was to accommodate the educational needs of the community. The building at 9859 East 16th Ave in downtown Aurora became headquarters, with a dedication ceremony held June 4, 1979 to officially trumpet the “Community College of Denver, Aurora Education Center.”

The Aurora Outreach Center may only be a historical footnote as educational institutions go. It was also a foot in the door, ostensibly a minor-league operation until the “big leagues” could arrive in the form of a city college citizens could call their own.

In 1972, efforts to land a community college had fallen on deaf ears for decades. It was only a few years removed from the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education giving a resounding thumbs down to the idea of designating Aurora as one of its initial campus sites.

Rather than mope, civic leader Ellin Mrachek hatched the idea to offer night classes at Hinkley High School. A year later, Mrachek convinced former teacher Marline McCracken to become coordinator of classes for the center before stepping aside.

The program initially would operate under the auspices of Community College of Denver and began with just six classes and 41 students.

More than six years later, McCracken was instrumental in having built a grass-roots operation into something tangible, despite CCD treating Aurora Outreach Center as “a stepchild.”

“We loved education and helping people and there were so many people that wanted to go back to college but couldn’t because of time and money,” McCracken said in a June interview in her Aurora home. “There were little colleges everywhere but we were the growing community in Denver and we didn’t have anything out here, and we just thought we should have something.

“But I thought it’s the greatest thing that ever...
Outreach Center: 'I called it the second chance for a lot of adults'

From Aurora Outreach Center/ Page 5

happened, because look how it took off once we got there.”

The spring of 1979 featured 78 class offerings, 66 of which filled, with nearly 700 students in attendance.

McCracken would depart shortly after the operation transitioned into Aurora Education Center, with Nai-Kwan Chang – later CCA’s first president -- serving as executive director.

But the seeds for a community college in Aurora had taken root.

“There was enough momentum, and I knew eventually they were going to have a college,” McCracken said. “People like Ellin started getting a lot of citizens on board. They formed a board and they were working on this. The citizens of Aurora … wanted it. And there was enough of a nucleus in place. They could offer more than 600 students to start something.

“That’s better than doing a building a seeing who was going to come.”

Getting to that point was the hard – and fun – part. It certainly wasn’t for the money.

McCracken, a realtor, started at $6 per hour for 10 hours a week, assisting Sara Collier, who worked in the community services division of CCD’s Auraria campus. The time commitment would soon double to 20 hours. But McCracken was jazzed that people that were getting back into the work force after a long absence, and that veterans and dropouts who needed help training for a career had an option.

“I called it the second chance for a lot of adults,” McCracken said.

Registrations were conducted at McCracken's kitchen table, with her home phone number listed on advertising. She would also hand type the class schedules and produce class rosters but “it got bigger and bigger and you realize you had to do something. ” Hiring her friend Pat Kirk for 20 hours per week helped lighten the load so she wouldn't have to be at facilities four nights weekly for several hours each.

McCracken also would enlist the help of her friend Gwen Thayer to help with marketing, which often consisted of brown-bag lunches to attract students or handing out pamphlets at Aurora Mall, supermarkets or as ‘take-me’ options on the counters of 7-Elevens and city day-care providers.

“Our beginning pamphlets were not too professional,” Thayer said with a laugh. “I would go around to different companies and ask if we could leave some here and told them what we were trying to do, and I thought the reception was very good. It just kept growing.”

Classes expanded to numerous locales throughout Aurora, to help serve citizens where they lived. Kirk would set up shop early at the class sites, answer questions, and brew mean cups of coffee. Students were charged 10 cents for the beverage, with free refills. The janitor drank for free since held have to clean up classroom spills.

Still, organized efforts to get legislative action on a centralized Aurora college continued to fail. And CCD, despite sending administrative and teaching help, remained lukewarm, in spite of Aurora Outreach Center’s steady gains.

“I helped down at Auraria sometimes,” said Thayer, who remains best friends with McCracken to this day. “It was a whole different ballpark down there. I thought, ‘Oh my golly, I’m not sure they wanted us to be that successful.’”

Chang’s arrival in 1979 with the thought of building an Aurora college independent of CCD and the official change to Aurora Education Center that June – still under CCD auspices – began a new chapter in this local educational fight.

“I just feel blessed I got to do it,” McCracken said. “I just wanted to see a college, and it had gotten to a point where they could take over. I couldn’t do anything more.”

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Spring Semester - January 15 to May 4, 1979

REGISTRATION: January 11, 1979
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
5:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

TUITION: $14.05 per credit hour for Colorado Resident
$61.85 per credit hour for Non-Resident

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CALL:
364-4935 or 365-3573
1980-81: Dr. Chang wanted to acquire top faculty and hired Tom Brosh as research associate and coordinator of academic affairs and Bud Ulrich as administrator of student support services for the CCD-Aurora Education Center. Additionally, Ron Walters was hired as a full-time faculty and Jo Roth to Student Services, while Tom Beyeler joined the Center for the Disadvantaged. Spring 1980 enrollment was 894, but ballooned to 1,174 for fall with a 25 percent minority base. At the time, Chang knew he was tackling a considerable undertaking but had confidence it would eventually amount to a Aurora community college. His emphasis would be on quality of teaching and student services despite lacking the resources/budget to run things the way he wanted. The funding of the Aurora Education Center remained an issue. In a letter to Dr. Robert E. Lahti, president of CCD, in January, the faculty of the Aurora Center laments the cancellation of “one-third of course offerings – a much larger cut in proportion to our size than other campuses.” Aurora resolution No. 62 proposing that Aurora be named a fourth independent community college site and a plan for serving the post-secondary needs of community colleges in Denver was submitted. Gov. Dick Lamm in December 1981 rejected the fourth-campus idea. In the fall, a General Advisory Committee appointed a task force on a future campus site selection. Tom Pickens is chairman of the Site Selection Task Force.

1982: In a letter to US Senator William L. Armstrong, Aurora mayor Dennis Champine, wrote on behalf of the city council and laid out his case for a future community college and asked for assistance in acquiring federal land for that purpose. Champine cited a recent groundswell during which numerous resolutions in support of the college had been adopted by the electorate as well as community and business organizations. “The General Advisory Committee to the Aurora Education Center (presently an extension of the Community College of Denver), which is composed of 22 of the community’s leading citizens, has diligently engaged in a considerable amount of agency and legislative lobbying on behalf of the City of Aurora,” he wrote. The committee’s objectives are to help the Aurora Education Center secure more favorable funding so that the citizens can be more adequately served by the Center and to develop a legislative action program “for the purpose of creating a state-supported community college in 1983.” The land is necessary to “facilitate the overall efforts of the General Advisory Committee” Meanwhile, the Site Selection Task Force studied site possibilities and recommended a site approximately 90 to 160 acres to be acquired on the Buckley Air National Guard Base, adjacent to the Aurora Vocational Technical Center. The GAC has approved the recommendation of the task force and suggests that 125 acres of the federal land be acquired for this purpose. The State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education would be the legal owner of the property. In a Jan. 1982 newspaper article, it was stated that “early next year” Aurora would discover the fate of a community college. The Colorado Commission on Higher Education was to meet to decide ‘if the plan for an autonomous degree-granting two-year college” was appropriate for Aurora, then Colorado’s third-largest city. A positive response from the commission would send the proposal to the 1983 Legislature via Senator J. Robert Allhouse, who represented the Aurora area. By this time, enrollment had spiked to more than 1,750 students with 163 class sections in a wide array of course and program areas. AEC full-time support staff was 13 and faculty numbered 92 – including 89 part-timers and full-time instructors from one of the other CCD campuses. Classroom locations included three high schools (Montbello, Overland, Smoky Hill), a child-care center (Aurora Learning Center), two office buildings – East Park Plaza (791 Chambers Rd.) and Buckingham Place (11111 E. Mississippi Ave), as well as AEC headquarters at 9859 East 16th Ave. Degree and transfer programs, job retraining and general interest classes were offered. Among the proponents of a permanent fix besides the city were various citizens’ groups, APS, Cherry Creek School District, Aurora Chamber of Commerce and ECO Aurora, the city’s development agency.” Yet an independent college couldn’t get off the ground without land on which to build. Linda Capra, an Aurora City Council member, felt a groundswell of support for a community college and the city has just acquired a 21-acre parcel of land. It was supposed to be open space but the city worked with council and other bodies to convince them the land would be perfect for the community college and that the offer of the “Breshnahan” land on Oct. 11 would be great incentive for the state to give a thumbs-up to the long-awaited project. The SBCCOE at this point recommended the establishment of Community College of Aurora and approved the master plan, which had been directed by the governor in preparation for a bill drafted for the 1983 General Assembly.

From a letter from then-Aurora Mayor Dennis Champine sought favorable funding for the Aurora Education Center and a legislative action plan for the purpose of creating a state-supported community college in 1983; Leo Robertson in the library at Buckingham Place; music faculty Tom Brosh tickles the ivories; 1982 logo for the General Advisory Committee.
Dr. Nai-Kwang Chang, executive director of the Aurora Education Center, walked into the old Aurora Municipal Building to check out what would be the institution’s first permanent home in 1979.

He immediately noticed a single phone sitting on the floor. Chang quickly learned that was the phone system in its entirety.

A facility that had once housed a courtroom and the police station and sat adjacent to a still functioning firehouse near 16th and Elmira was chosen as the centralized location for classes and administration for the fledgling operation.

But first, Chang and others had to beg, borrow and scrape together the bare necessities, like furniture, desks, and yes, additional phones to make this work. They took extras from Community College of Denver, piled them to the ceiling and trucked them over.

At least the lease from the city was cheap.

“It was a mishmash,” said Florian Supercynski, a student at AEC and an early “gopher” charged with setting up requisitions with CCD among other varied duties.

“There were very few classrooms. Everything was spread apart, and it didn’t have the feeling of being a school – especially with a jail cell sitting in there.”

The fire department at 9859 E. 16th Ave. was connected on the west side and a library branch sat to the east with AEC in the middle section police had abandoned for more modern amenities.

AEC faculty Tom Brosh taught downstairs, and his classes featured more than music to his students’ ears.

“We’d hear the first alert siren to get everybody going,” he recalled. “It didn’t really affect the rest of the people because we were kind of down below, right adjacent to the fire department – ‘we’ meaning the music department. It wasn’t that bad but it was almost humorous in a way. We were listening to a symphony or something, then all of a sudden we’d hear a siren go off to alert the firemen.

“Of course, there was always an emergency so it wasn’t that humorous.”

Back then, it was a skeleton crew working at the old police/fire building. Chang, Supercynski and Brosh were joined by the likes of Jo Morgan-Brooks, Bud Ulrich, Tom Beyeler, Terri Campbell, Katie Smolka, Rella Douglas, Walt Schlager, Everett Perkins, Billy Fielden, and Ron Walters, an accounting teacher who was the first full-time faculty hired.

“The building didn’t impress me much either way,” recalled Ulrich, who was coordinator of student services at AEC. “I had a counseling office and counselors and an admissions office. The thing that struck me about starting back then like that was the functions of the people. The attitude of us there in that building was that we’re not staffed with a director of admissions or each of the offices you might expect at a college so everybody had to pull their weight, whatever they could, no matter what the job description was. In fact, we didn’t pay attention to job descriptions. It was get the job done.”

Rooms evolved as necessary, too, depending on class sizes.

“We had classes that were rectangular, square, and others I’m not sure what they were,” remembered Jim Weedin, a part-time science teacher at the time and a cog in the CCA culture for 30 years.

At least no one had to occupy the holding cell unwillingly, though a few homeless people often graced the interior premises. There were numerous complaints around the neighborhood about parking problems.

Fielden manned maintenance, night security – and registered students.

“Many, many nights I’d remember the alarm would go off at the old fire department and he’d get out of bed and drive down there, and we lived quite away on Buckley Road,” longtime CCA employee Edna Fielden said of her late husband. “It was the wind many times rattling the door and setting the alarm off.”
"Petitions Circulate on College" – Aurora Advocate, Undated: Petitions to hold an election on the desirability of establishing a community college district are now being circulated in Aurora. It is hoped to hold a spring election and if the college is approved it would probably open in 1950.

“College Plans Being Readied” – Aurora Advocate, Oct. 3, 1957: Preparations were getting underway last week to draft the first concrete plan in the founding of a Junior College to serve Aurora, Englewood, Littleton, Cherry Creek and Sheridan school districts.

At a special meeting held last week designed to acquaint school district residents with the problems involved, a 10-member steering committee agreed tentatively to meet Oct. 16 with the aim of drafting preliminary plans for the institution.

“Mansfield Calls for Jr. College Committee Here” – Aurora Advocate, Nov. 7, 1957: Plans to get underway in forming a district for a community college took another step forward Thursday evening when the chairman of the citizens committees met at the Englewood Board of Education office. The school districts involved are the five western districts of Arapahoe County, Aurora, Cherry Hills, Englewood, Littleton and Sheridan Union. William B. Mansfield, Aurora councilman and chairman of Aurora’s committee, represented Aurora.

“Board Approves Election On Community College For Area” – Aurora Advocate, March 13, 1958: An election on the establishment of a community college in Arapahoe county (sic) will be held sometime this spring.

The state board of education approved the election Wednesday and petitions will be presented to the Arapahoe county superintendent of schools. The superintendent will then set the date for the election.

Mansfield pointed out that all proponents of the college have been working hard to bring about the election and if the college is approved a community college in Arapahoe county will definitely be held sometime in late September or early October, Mrs. Beulah Davies Anderson, assistant superintendent of schools. The superintendent will then set the date for the election.

Community College open to all Aurorans who want to gain skills, education” – Aurora Advocate, August 21, 1968: The newly instituted Community College of Denver president said this week that his school is prepared to accept anyone with a desire to get at least a two year college education. In his remarks to a group of newmen (sic) President Leland B. Luchsinger stated “... The College is truly an Open Door Institution.”

“Vo-Tech looks to community college” – Aurora Advocate Sentinel: March 14, 1973: Officials of the Aurora Vocational-Technical Center will be just one month old Thursday, but Vo-Tech planners are already looking ahead to expanding the facility to include more adult education classes, and, eventually, a community college for the city.

Vo-Tech officials this week began soliciting letters of support from local civic and business leaders to include with an application to the State Board of Community Colleges and Occupational Education for “designation as an area tech center.”

If granted such a designation would make the Vo-Tech Center eligible for state monies to expand its facilities, according to Director of Vocational Education Harold Dunning.

“We'd like to service more adults and get going on the community college so we can start service in that area,” Dunning said. He indicated that, if the Vo-Tech center gets the sought-after designation, it will probably begin as a kind of extension of Arapahoe Community College.”

“Community College topic of planning; After 26 years, talk continues” – Aurora Advocate Sentinel, April 21, 1976: When it comes to higher education in Denver’s suburbs, Aurora is still low on the totem pole. Community colleges are serving the core city’s suburbs to the north, south and west – but none in the east.

As a topic of conversation, creation of an Aurora Community College has been a perennial favorite. But as a solid reality – a tax-funded community project – it is still low on the list of popular priorities.

“Aurora college near last state obstacle” – Aurora Advocate Sentinel, Nov. 17, 1976: The state board of education has done, “said William Mansfield, Wednesday, Aurora chairman of the movement to establish the college.

But Aurora officials, who long have sought a community college, have designated a 21-acre site for a campus at Chambers Road and East First Ave.

“It's a foot in the door, obviously it is,” said Kay Miller, city lobbyist for Aurora, of the staff recommendation.

“Official, Auro-
In 1979, Community College of Denver picked a leader for its growing educational institution in the east metro area. He’d leave having achieved a local dream that was three decades in the making, building consensus along the way.

Plain and simple, Dr. Nai-Kwang Chang was sent to Aurora to fail not become a pioneer.

Community College of Denver, for whom Chang once served in a vice presidential role, had fallen out of favor with the institution’s new president, Dr. Robert E. Lahti, and it had taken the backing of some powerful cohorts to even have the opportunity to be transferred to the suburbs.

Chang envisioned the move as such: “Exile,” he said, adding, “Even the lawyer of the committee for the school advised me to look for another job and move on if I can.”

But Chang had put in more than two decades in state higher education, and he wasn’t about to be bullied so easily. Perhaps that resolve also traced back to his upbringing.

“Oriental stubbornness: one reason,” the 83-year-old Chang said in a June phone interview from California. “Because failure is something I don’t accept.”

So, instead of merely turning the calendar pages toward eventual retirement, Chang made up his mind to fight. His vision: The Aurora Education Center for whom he’d serve as executive director merely would be a stepping stone to creating an independent community college in a city that had failed on that count for nearly three decades.

His attitude from the start was steely and determined. At the time he thought, “I’m going to raise an Army and go back to the Capitol, ” Chang said bluntly. “And so it happened.”

Not easily. Citizens locally seemingly had the will, but what of the politicians? Chang not only would have to convince Aurora’s city council, mayor and business community that he was the man to finally get this project to pay dirt but, more importantly, figure out how to placate a state legislative body that had regularly thumbed its nose at Aurora. It didn’t help that not only CCD wasn’t in favor of a Community College of Aurora but there were detractors all around the state community college system, at Aurora Public Schools and Pickens Tech.

Asked how difficult a fight it ended up being, Chang paused before responding, “My answer would be I was too naïve to think I could handle the job.”

The Aurora Education Center was successful, piggy-backing off the efforts of its precursor, Aurora Outreach Center. In late 1982, nearly 1,800 students attended classes at eight locations. But the setup was impractical and despite it’s successes felt second class.

Only an independent college would placate Chang and a growing number of proponents.

“He went out and started making a whole bunch of waves in the community about a college out there and it drove CCD crazy,” said Jo Roth, who began at AEC in 1979 and left in 2001 as CCA’s VP of Student Services. “Because they were just thinking, ‘A little outreach center, a couple classes out there, let him do his thing and ignore him and maybe he’ll go away at some point.’ But Chang started beating the drums in Aurora and got everyone whipped up and got everything happening.”

To his employees, Chang was something of an enigma. He was considered nice by some and a task-
master by others. He could be both demanding and grateful. One former worker described his approach as “the carrot and the stick at the same time,” combining management by fear with a milder side. The academic segment seemed to feel it received the stick most often.

“I really appreciated his approach,” said Bud Ulrich, who was Chang’s right-hand man from 1980-84 and CCA’s first dean of student development. “There was no weak-willie approaches to solving problems. Problems were solved. If a teacher did not cooperate with attempts to questions of students or their teaching, they wouldn’t be back or they could be fired on the spot. So his approach was, ‘We’ll solve problems when they come up. We’re not going to fool around with it.’ And some people, like myself, liked that. He demanded results.”

Jim Weedin, a 30-year veteran at CCA and AEC, recalled Chang once telling him that the stern approach was a byproduct of his background, which meant “that he was the leader, therefore he should direct things or flat-out tell you what to do.”

“Other times he might discuss it,” Weedin added, “but it always came back to him. Yet, he’d also reward you.”

Certainly, Aurora eventually would reap the benefits of his work ethic.

Several key moments set the stage for CCA’s creation. One of the biggest was forging a relationship with state Sen. Robert Allhouse, an Aurora Republican at the time, who convinced 38 legislators to co-sponsor his bill to create the college, which would pass in May 1983.

Chang said that Allhouse “was blamed by many people that he did very little for his community” and helped convince the senator that a community college in his district would go far in dispelling that reputation. Allhouse also was the chairman of the education committee, so it was a plum opportunity for him to take a lead role.

“To pay his debt,” is how Chang put it.

Convincing the Colorado Commission on Higher Education to get on board also was a pivotal step, as was the acquisition of 13 acres of land from the City of Aurora known as the Breshnahan property to eventually build CentreTech campus. Chang even managed to smooth the edges with a new CCD president, G. Owen Smith, who didn’t stand in the way and, Chang said, worked well with him.

“Chang was a relentless campaigner for making this a real community college,” said Linda Cracraft, who served on the Aurora City Council from 1980-88 under her maiden name, Capra. “We settled for a community college without walls in the beginning, but Chang said, worked well with him.

An old story that was circulating when Chang first arrived illustrates just how far he did come in realizing his vision. Workers that were there upon his arrival in Aurora recall Chang walking into the office with his executive secretary, Katie Smolka, carrying a couple of cardboard boxes with personal items. Banished.

Four years later, celebrations filled Aurora at the news that, at long last, independence had been won – for the college, and, in a sense, Chang, who was no longer under the thumb of CCD.

“It was a matter of principle. It was,” he said. “Because I was doing the right things. I don’t play games.”

He instead had built his Army of won, as planned. And as Chang reflected, he said getting the last laugh on his initial detractors that predicted his failure “selfishly speaking” is a good feeling.

Looking back, “I cannot say I enjoyed with love every minute of the way,” he chuckled. “But I survived.”
Quote to note

“I thought it would never happen. That was my personal feeling back then. We were hoping against hope and when it did happen I was a little surprised. I don’t know why I felt that way. Things were going so slow legislatively and things were not coming and I had a feeling like, ’I guess it’s never going to happen.’ I guess I had the feeling that all the other legislators didn’t want Aurora to have anything because if Aurora got this thing it was probably going to blossom and take away from their thunder.”

-- Florian Supercynski, AEC/CCA employee 1981-99

Is this seat taken?

Back in the AEC days, Jo Roth was better known as Jo Morgan-Brooks. The former part-time academic counselor and future CCA vice president recalled the frequent presence of some unwanted guests at during the old days at the former Aurora Municipal Building: “Did anyone tell you about the homeless people that used to come in off the street? In the ladies room there used to be a little sofa couch, one of those little leather day beds and in the morning you’d have to go chase them out. There were only one or two. But you’d go into the ladies room in the morning and there would be a homeless person sleeping on the little day bed. It just became part of what you dealt with, and they’d leave as soon as you asked them. I never had any problems with them.”

Sleeper cell

Walt Schlagel coordinated the computer area at Aurora Outreach Center. But he was known as much for his nighttime habits teaching bytes and bits.

Schlagel lived in Colorado Springs, so in order to avoid the commute, he would sleep on a small mattress he provided in the ‘drunk tank’ or holding cell that was part of the old Municipal Building that first housed Aurora Education Center.

“Which got interesting by the way,” science faculty Jim Weedin recalled. “He got sick one time with the flu and he needed to go to the restrooms and once you get out of that room, they had alarms set. He had to punch in the numbers to stop the alarm to go do his business, come back, put the codes back in and go back to bed. “I hear one night he had to do that three times.”

Hoosier daddy?

Bud Ulrich recounts an early encounter at the Aurora Education counseling office: “I graduated from Purdue University many years ago and traveled in various states – Oregon, Ohio and finally had the chance to come to Colorado. I worked in the Colorado Department of Education and finally got employed at Community College of Aurora. Our main competitor and rival at Purdue was Indiana University and so I’m sitting in the little office in the fire station talking to a student who wanted me to evaluate his credits from Indiana University. It just doesn’t match up. We talked a little while and he couldn’t believe it. We didn’t recognize Indiana? Finally I told him I’m from Purdue, then, of course, we went ahead and did his business. It was that kind of situation. You could have fun with people as well as know you were in a developing college that was a minor blip on the screen.”

BY THE NUMBERS

A breakdown of enrollments of Aurora Education Center:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budgeted FTE</th>
<th>Actual FTE</th>
<th>Difference Annual Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>plus 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>plus 94 46 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>plus 124 42 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The name game

Some of the early incarnations of CCA prior to it gaining approval as an independent college in 1983:

- Western Arapahoe County Community College (failed petition 1950s)
- Eastern Community College (1977, failed effort spearheaded by Aurora Representative Gerry Frank)
- Aurora Community College Center (1982 change from Aurora Education Center, with understanding that legal status name change was required if legislature approved the campus status issue in the 1983 General Assembly)

GAC members in the ’70s, ’80s were the real go-getters

Members of the General Advisory Committee to the Aurora Education Center, whose task it was to urge the Colorado State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education to adopt the master plan for Community College of Aurora:

- Olen L. Bell, Hal Dunning, Margaret Gerhart, Dennis Hansen, James Hekkers, Bruce Huiley, Helen Kahn
Coming soon: Community College of Aurora finally takes flight. The East Park Building opens. A School Without Walls emerges. And development begins on a new campus with a new president, Dr. Larry Carter. (Photo by Dave Jennnings, Courtesy of Aurora History Museum)
For most of us, “throw me a bone” is merely an expression.

Not for Gary Scott. “The Police Department has literally done that,” Scott said with a laugh. “Here’s a bone. Come look at it . . .”

There’s a good reason Scott’s number is on speed dial, whether it’s police detectives, medical examiners, cadaver dog trainers or other law enforcement on the other end.

Scott has spent his adult life finding artifacts, identifying relics, and most recently, getting deeper into the forensics side of things. A Community College of Aurora adjunct for about 16 years, many of the subjects he discovers in the great outdoors (and less inviting indoor settings in police settings) can then be knowledgably discussed with his students.

Over the last two years, he’s embarked on a project alongside Dr. Cathy Gaither of Metro State University, where she’s established a Human Identification Lab to assist the medical and archaeological communities in cataloging their finds in the history books.

Scott’s practical and field experience in forensics took root there, touching upon the actual identification individuals or trying to gauge the cause of death.

“I would say we’ve had 30 cases we’ve dealt with and these cases can range from just whether it’s human or not or whether it’s a forensic or not, or there’s a full range of analysis.”

Scott and Gaither often switch roles as analysts and peer analysts on cases, meaning one does the research and the other attempts to confirm the findings. Their association could grow in the future, as Scott insists he’s able to compartmentalize in such situations.

“The methodology would be the same,” he explained. “The unpleasant component of dealing with decomposing bodies is something I push back and approach in a clinical fashion. Everybody’s aware it’s a very real person that’s passed, whether it’s murder, suicide or just natural – drugs or whatever. For myself, this is what my job is, what I have to focus on and make sure I do it correctly.”

As if Scott didn’t have enough on his plate, he’s also the owner of a paint company for more than 12 years. So he’s part Picasso, part Quincy? Scott instead sticks to the office, where he can, hopefully, mine profits.

Many nights, it’s then off to the classroom, where he gets to be colorful – and informative.

In 2012, Scott was given the Tom Brosh Award at CCA, recognizing the college’s top adjunct.

“It’s just a passion. I enjoy face-to-face teaching,” he said. “Personally, I enjoy the interaction with students and seeing them get enthused about their education. I also like to really promote students having a real understanding of what their degree will or won’t provide them in terms of future occupations and jobs.

“If they want to be an anthropologist, I want them to be fully aware of what it’ll take for them to become one and what the compensation will be at the end. And if they’re not going into anthropology, I like them to have an appreciation for what anthropology can offer, even if they’re going to be going into law or something else.”

During his career in his various fields, Scott has gotten to dig, unearth and exhume in five different states: Utah, Colorado, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Tennessee. His archaeology pursuits have taken him to historical prehistoric sites that have uncovered lithic or stone artifacts to actual physical dwelling structures of past villages. The oldest item he believes he’s ever found dated back 2,000 years, but he did explore a site that was three times that old.

“It’s intriguing because it’s a link to somebody else that either manufactured or built something. In a sense it’s part of their garbage but it does tell something about the people who lived there. I enjoy it. It does fulfill a personal interest of wanting to know more about the folks who lived in the past.”

In the present all of these experiences are put front and center to his CCA students. This isn’t textbook stuff.

It’s real-life experience brought to the fore, minus some of the private details of criminal work. Yes, it’s true. He won’t throw them any bones. Just part of the job.

“IT’S JUST A PASSION. I ENJOY FACE-TO-FACE TEACHING. PERSONALLY, I ENJOY THE INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS AND SEEING THEM GET ENTHUSED ABOUT THEIR EDUCATION. I ALSO LIKE TO REALLY PROMOTE STUDENTS HAVING A REAL UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THEIR DEGREE WILL OR WON’T PROVIDE THEM IN TERMS OF FUTURE OCCUPATIONS AND JOBS.” - GARY SCOTT
Elite National Guard unit gets a taste of real life

Real-life events in recent months in Boston, Waco, Texas, Oklahoma City and elsewhere have shed an important light on the training necessary to combat wide-scale disaster scenarios, whether resulting from manmade or natural causes.

Such incidents served as a backdrop for a training exercise June 8 hosted by Community College of Aurora that featured a combined force of more than 200 National Guard soldiers from both the Army and Air Force that could be called to respond to such real-life events at a moment's notice.

This particular unit ensconced in training is one of only 17 Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) Enhanced Response Force Package teams in the country.

The training at CCA highlighted the military's expertise in search and evacuation, decontamination, and medical capabilities. The scenario was built around an overarching storyline in which multiple explosive devices allegedly leveled a parking structure, resulting in mass casualties and injuries at an adjoining "hotel," which was actually Building 900 on CCA's Lowry campus.

"Chemical dispersal devices" were placed in areas adjacent to the target. In such a real-world crisis, fire agencies and FBI would respond but their involvement was understood as having already occurred. Also assumed in the mock scenario were that Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) alarms were activated, necessitating aid of expert team trained in weapons on mass destruction. That elite force allegedly discovered trace amounts of potentially lethal chemicals and mitigated the explosive devices, setting the action on the ground at CCA in motion.

"What's most important is that we have different areas that are unique and present different challenges," said LTC Seamus Doyle, commander of the Colorado National Guard CBRNE Response Force package. "What's great about the location at Community College of Aurora is that we have a building that we can tear up to replicate an actual disaster-type event occurring at that location and also the area outside of it for establishing our area of operations and a rubble pile.

"What that does is stress us to deploy multiple teams simultaneously in different types of events that we don't really get in other training areas. So it's unique that CCA has different areas that require different skills that we can customize."

Building 900, a former Air Force sleeping quarters, was outfitted with jumbled hallways and guest rooms just after an explosion. Remnants of the bomb blast were evident everywhere on the first two floors, including "injured" live actors, who had undergone moulage (detailed makeup) to mimic injuries consistent with this type of event, and "deceased" guests, portrayed by mannequins. Additionally, high-tech simulation mannequins owned by the college's Center for Simulation mimicked specific medical conditions as part of the assessment process by the triage and medical teams.

An outdoor rubble pile was constructed to mirror a collapsed concrete parking structure, with a car buried underneath, hiding potential trapped victims and/or casualties.

The scope of the activity could be monitored from the Disaster Management Institute (DMI) on CCA's campus that serves as a fully functional Emergency Operations Center and allows incident command to assess the exercise from afar via technology rare to a community-college setting around the country.

The City of Aurora's fire chief served as an incident commander on the civilian side working hand in hand with command-and-control in the military to oversee all operations. Pony Anderson from the Center for Simulation was the point person working with the military and setting up the disaster scene -- and scenario.

"When I found this place, I didn't know what to expect," said SFC Joe Ziser, incident commander for the exercise. "But the training venues that are provided, between the simulation laboratories in the DMI as well as the 900 building are fantastic. And the flexibility to add and subtract training opportunities based on our requirements is huge."

In the mock scenario, intel suggested there were 677 occupants in the hotel prior to the explosion and 189 unaccounted for. The team established a footprint for command and control, decontamination, medical, and search and evacuation, while beginning tactical objectives.

Both Doyle and Ziser said emphatically that training will return to CCA in the future to take advantage of its spaces, resources and knowledge staging such events.
The installation of the intercom system at CCA continues throughout the first couple weeks of July. It ultimately will allow broadcasts throughout both campus during emergencies, the IT department announced.

Cables are continuing to be run through buildings at Lowry and CentreTech. The work will not affect classes in session.

Any questions or concerns, please contact Sandra Tompkins, director of information technology, at 303-360-4738.

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Tutoring will continue throughout the summer months, Academic Support Coordinator Pau Nazaryk Molai announced.

Faculty is encouraged to advise students of this ongoing service.

Math tutoring is available on a drop-in basis in Classroom building, Rm. 109. Students taking ESL classes can receive assistance in July in the same room.

Writing Studio is by appointment and available to students through Student tab in MyCCA. The link to the Writing Studio group application is in the Academic Support channel under Tutoring. The tutoring schedule also is posted online in this location.

NetTutor, or online tutoring, is available to students through D2L on the Course Home page. Writing feedback is given through their Paper Center. The turnaround time is guaranteed at 72 hours, but the average return time is 35 hours. Math tutoring is synchronous/live using a white board.

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The Student Government Association is holding fundraisers at Lowry (June 29, outside West Quad) and at CentreTech (July 30, outside walkway). Both events will run from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Food choices will include a beef burger, veggie burger or hot dog with a side and a drink for $5.

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Xerox machines around both campuses are beginning to be fitted with card readers that require magnetic key fob/card access. Magnetic key cards can be acquired via the CCA IT Helpdesk (A201L) at CentreTech or through Glen Murphy (Bldg. 859, Room 105) at Lowry. The issued card will work on all Xerox machines in the Classroom and Fine Arts buildings at CentreTech and building 859 at Lowry.

Logging in manually is possible by inputting the same username and password used to log into college computers. For more information, contact the IT support desk at 303-360-4900.

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Counselors will be available throughout the summer within a revised schedule, VP of Student Affairs Betsy Oudenhoven announced.

Those hours are Monday (2-5 p.m.), Tuesday (11 a.m.-5 p.m.), Wednesday (10 a.m.-4 p.m.), and Thursday (9 a.m.-2 p.m).

The counseling office is located in the Advising area of the Administration building at CentreTech. Appointments can be made through Javon Brame (303-360-4932).

Additionally, the Aurora Mental Health Crisis Line number is 30-617-2300 if counselors are unavailable.

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Tim Cali has begun working as the new Coordinator of Student Life.

Cali has a bachelor's degree in History with a minor in Urban Sociology from Illinois State University. He comes to CCA with broad experience in student affairs, including student activities, orientation, financial aid, international students, veteran's affairs and disability services.

Cali's role at the college will be to develop student activities and events and forge and inclusive community that facilitates student engagement, fosters leadership development, and promotes positive citizenship.

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There are four openings for work-study or unpaid interns (with a minimum 2.5 GPA) on the Student Activities Board. Those positions are as follows: Social Events Programmer; Educational/Multi-cultural Events Programmer; Leadership Programmer; and Publicity/Marketing Programmer.

Board members will meet with Student Life staff and Student Government to plan implement student activities and events and discuss the use of student activities fees.

The positions require a 10-hour or greater commitment weekly.

For application information, log on to http://www.ccaurora.edu/about-cca/student-activities-board-sab, or contact Tim Cali at 303-360-4726.

Effective July 1, there will be new Testing Center hours at CTC in Administration Room 205, Registrar/Director of Admissions Kristen Cusack announced.

The schedule is as follows: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Hours run from 9 a.m.-7 p.m. on Wednesdays and 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on Saturdays. Full assessment must start 90 minutes prior to the day's closing; partial one hour before closing.

The Thursday closing time will be pushed back two hours during July 15-Aug. 31 and Dec. 15-Jan. 31, as those are considered "peak hours."

The Testing Center has responsibility for Accuplacer and CPT testing.

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Front Range Community College will be offering a session on Immersive Learning Environments from July 7-29. It is open to all educators. Interested parties should contact Kae Novak at kae.novak@frofronrange.edu or call 303-404-5470. This is part of the immersive and game-based teaching initiative and participation and/or simply observing are equally fine.

Tammy McKenzie's one-woman exhibition is now on display at the Donna Moravec Gallery and will run through Aug. 9. Additionally, the accomplished photographer will be giving an artist talk July 17 at 3 p.m. and also lead a workshop on July 27 at 3 p.m. To RSVP to the latter event, please contact Celia Miller-Morsiey at 303-340-7335 or celia.miller@ccaurora.edu.

McKenzie is a Denver native who has had her work exhibited on multiple occasions at the Arvada Center for the Arts and other shows including at The Denver Public Library and Colorado Photographic Art Center. Some of her art includes nature photography and work with alternative processes and "toy" cameras.

The Moravec Gallery is located in Building 901, North Quad, at Lowry. It's open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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Nicolle Hockert began in a new position as admissions specialist on June 3. Hockert previously had worked in Outreach and Recruitment/Concurrent Enrollment.

Hockert's new duties span from application to graduation and beyond. She assists students in advising, registration, residency determinations, transcripts, admissions requirements, and more.

Hockert is a former CCA student who also owns a bachelor's degree in anthropology from Community College of Denver.

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Several departments have undergone name changes. Administration has been recast as Office of the President. Student Services has become Office of Student Affairs. Also, Fiscal Affairs now has VP Richard Maestas under its umbrella, rather than him holding an "Administration" designation.

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Two new employees have been added to the Information Technology department, its director, Sandra Tompkins announced.

Tyler Fullerton has been added as server administrator, where he will deal with infrastructure, file and print sharing, Windows Exchange, virtual environments and more.

Fullerton comes to the college from All Covered, where he was a Level II Engineer. He has an associates degree in Computer Networking Systems from ITT Tech in Thornton, Colo.

Kathleen Potter will serve as admissions specialist, where she will be tasked with purchasing and inventory issues and fill in on the help desk.

She comes to CCA from Red Rocks Community College, where she studied Web Design.
Clockwise from top: Some furry visitors make their presence known at Lowry campus, as captured by Bob Woods, director of Computer Science; adjunct faculty Ryan Ronnebaum didn’t let his time go to waste June 18 in spite of a tornado warning that sent his students out into the safe zone. Ronnebaum continued to teach his Anatomy and Physiology II class in this photo submitted by Marialane Guilory-Flippen, grant project manager; summertime at CenterTech near the Administration Building is kept in full bloom with a much needed drink, delivered by groundskeeper Bobby McKie; emergency vehicles park as close as possible June 20 to the Fine Arts Building as a joint training exercise between Aurora Public Schools, CCA, Aurora Police, Aurora Fire is conducted.