

News Briefs



Interim JJC President Frank Zeller speaks with Illinois Lt. Governor Shelia Simon during her visit to the college Sept. 22.

Zeller Appointed Interim President

Following the death of President Gena Proulx on Aug. 12, the Joliet Junior College Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Frank Zeller as the college's interim president.

Zeller's appointment was approved by the board after Proulx, JJC president since 2006, lost her three-year battle with cancer. Zeller, of Peru, was initially hired earlier the same month to serve as an interim senior executive to oversee day-to-day college operations while President Proulx was on sick leave. Now, he will serve as JJC's interim president while the college conducts a nationwide presidential search.

Zeller has worked at JJC before, once in 2001 with then-president J.D. Ross as the college celebrated its 100th anniversary and again in 2010 with Dr. Proulx, both in the position of interim vice president of administrative services.

"I'm pleased to be here and work with the Joliet Junior College family again,"

Zeller said. "I think it's important to keep the college going in the direction Dr. Proulx would want, continuing to streamline student services and providing the space necessary for programs that address job shortages in our communities."

Zeller added that in the last three years, the college campus increased its square footage by over 50 percent, space that he said is vital to provide the necessary educational and job training opportunities that are so intrinsic to the college's mission.

No stranger to higher education in Illinois, Zeller served for 27 years as chief financial officer of Illinois Valley

Community College before retiring in 2000. He holds a bachelor's degree from Lewis University, a master's degree and a doctorate in school business management from Northern Illinois University.

Floral Team Wins National Competition

Earlier this summer, two students from Joliet Junior College triumphed in the National American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD) competition, placing first in the nation. The contest was held in San Francisco, in early July.

Both Kathryn Wahl of New Lenox and Betsy Cangiano of Oswego tied for first place for overall designer of the year. Wahl also placed first in bridal bouquet and Cangiano in banquet design.

"The event made history," said Donna Theimer, JJC professor and department chair of agriculture, horticulture and veterinary medical technology. "For the first time in the competition, two students from the same college tied for first place."

JJC also brought home six additional awards. Cangiano placed second in sweetheart table design and eighth in bridal bouquet. Wahl placed third in banquet design, ninth in napkin design and 10th in sweetheart design and Kaitlyn Harlow of Kinsman placed fourth in sweetheart table design.



Left to right: Kathryn Wahl, Betsy Cangiano, Diane Chamberlin and Kaitlyn Harlow.



Left to right: Fashion designer and guest judge Joe Katz, JJC culinary grad and lab assistant Heather Schreiner, judge Kerry Vincent and Chef Andy Chlebana.



The Food Network Challenge set.

Diane Chamberlain of New Lenox was also a part of the team.

The competition consists of four categories including bridal bouquet, banquet design, sweetheart table design and napkin design. The students have one hour to create and complete a design in each category with the exception of napkin design, which takes place in a 45-minute session.

Each category was judged on methodical use of color, depth, line, balance, focal emphasis, unity and proportion. Points are also awarded for flawless mechanics, appropriate interpretation for the category and creativity.

JJC Chef Wins Food Network Challenge

Joliet Junior College Chef Andy Chlebana won the Food Network Challenge in an episode that aired on the network on April 24.

In the show, Chlebana competed against two other chefs to successfully create a dress made of sugar. Chlebana, of Plainfield, was joined by his lab assistant and 2009 JJC alumna Heather Schreiner of Minooka, who flew with him to Denver in November 2010 to tape the show.

The theme of the show was Sugar Fashion, which means each contestant must create fashionable ensembles and accessories for four mannequins, all of which must be made of sugar.

But creating the dress wasn't the only challenge—they had to transport the piece—made of hundreds of delicate, multi-colored petals—four miles from where they built it to display in a storefront window.

In addition to bragging rights, Chlebana, a 1995 JJC alumnus, also won \$10,000 for winning the contest, which he said he'll use to take his family to Disney World.

"I've never heard them scream so loud," Chlebana told the Channahon-Minooka Patch as he watched the show Sunday night with his wife Heather and twin daughters Abigail and Annabel, 8, and sons Andy, 7, and Adler, 3.

Chlebana was chosen by Food Network producers after sending in a video application that addressed why he should be featured on the show.

In 2008, Chlebana was honored by the American Culinary Federation as its National Pastry Chef of the Year.



Chef Chlebana's winning creation, a dress made entirely of sugar.