

A PUBLICATION OF ELGIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Impact

Spring 2024 | Volume 30 | Issue 4

**From ECC to  
world-renowned  
photographer —  
See how Sandro  
Miller's career  
developed.**

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1949-2024







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The mission of Elgin Community College is to improve people's lives through learning.

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- Freedom of Inquiry
- Ethical Practices
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Holistic Approach

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# 75 Years of Celebration

## A message from the ECC President and Board Chair

Dear ECC Community,

**E**lgin Community College celebrates a big milestone this year — 75 years of excellence in teaching and learning. It's truly an honor that we can celebrate the achievements of our college, as well as the progress we have made in fostering community relationships and strengthening ties within our area since 1949.

To honor our history and achievements, we have planned yearlong activities to recognize the many successes of our students, employees, trustees, and community members who have helped ECC grow and achieve over the years.

This summer, we have a fun, free event called Mutts Gone Nuts on Saturday, July 13, from 3 to 5 pm. This event features astonishing stunt dogs with side-splitting comedy that is fun for the whole family. And, to end the summer, we have a special three-day event from August 16 to 18 with the performance group Squonk, known for immersive experiences. The group will present their new show, "Brouhaha," at ECC's Green Space.

The outdoor spectacle will include rollicking music, dazzling imagery, and the thrill of audience participation. Each show is roughly 30 to 40 minutes, free to attend, and is family-friendly.

We believe in the power of events and how they can enhance a sense of belonging and community fellowship. When you come to ECC, we want you to feel welcome and that you belong on campus, in our classrooms, and in our communities.

This edition of *Impact* magazine shares a few alumni stories and how their successes began at ECC. We believe that each of our students has a story, and ECC is often just the beginning. But it's a crucial first step, and we will do all we can to help our students believe in themselves and explore their potential.

With that, please enjoy the stories of Lisa Marshall, Sandro Miller, and Frank Catalano. You'll also read about a few students who received scholarships through the ECC Foundation. We provide a number of supports for our students, from in-classroom accommodations to financial assistance, to help them achieve their goals and improve their lives through learning.

Thank you for your continued support.

**David Sam, PhD, JD, LLM**  
President



**Donna Redmer, EdD**  
Chair, Board of Trustees



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**ON THE COVER:**

Photographer Sandro Miller in his Chicago home and studio.

# Sensational 75

Elgin Community College is recognizing sensational alumni who have gone on to represent the best of ECC with their success, talents, and contributions to their career fields and communities. In this issue, we feature three of them — Sandro Miller, Lisa Marshall, and Frank Catalano. ECC will highlight the remaining alumni on social media and the website through the fall.

**Paula Amenta**  
**Andrea Andrada**

**Bill Angelo**  
**Vince Balistreri**  
**Melissa Barbosa-Guzman**

**Jean Bingham**  
**Walter Blalark**

**Ernie Broadnax**  
**Luis Cabrera**

**Mary Camacho**  
**Cristina Castro**

**Frank Catalano**  
**Kayla Chase**

**Maria Cumpata**  
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**Irma DeLeon**  
**Donald DeWitte**

**Duffy Siblings**  
**Jane (Duffy) Jorgensen**

**Paul Duffy**  
**Sarah (Duffy) Sophie**

**Steve Duffy**

**Dumoulin Cousins**  
**Cassie Dumoulin**  
**Bridget Dumoulin Sessions**

**Alex Dumoulin**  
**Michelle Dumoulin**

**Jenny Dumoulin Beeber**  
**Becky Dumoulin**

**Tricia Dumoulin**  
**Nikki Dumoulin**

**Maggie Goad**

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**David Durrant**  
**Susan Ela**  
**John Fahy**  
**Sharon Fisher-Larson**

**Dean Follmann**  
**Amanda Garcia**

**Carol Gieske**  
**Kimberly Gilmore**

**Gonzalez Family**  
**Diego Gonzalez**

**Karen Gonzalez**  
**Priscilla Gonzalez**

**Leslie Gonzalez**

**Rick Green**  
**Dean Haacker**

**James Hallock**  
**Katherine Hannell**

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**Diane Kerruish**  
**Peggy Kirby**

**Alan Kirk**  
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**Ronald Krivosik**  
**Alan Ladwig**

**Zach Laidlaw**

**James Lamkin**  
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**Julie Lichtenberg**  
**Diane Lukas**

**Dale Mackall**  
**Christina Marrocco**

**Lisa Marshall**  
**Charmaine McAllister**

**Sandro Miller**  
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# The CEO

# LISA MARSHALL

**Lisa Marshall recently celebrated her** first year as the CEO of the Wisconsin Board of Realtors, an affiliate of the National Association of Realtors.

Marshall, who said she is also the first Black CEO in her role, said she learned to strive for excellence through missteps. The desire for discipline and a determined mindset was always there, but it wasn't until she dropped out of Columbia College Chicago that she was truly ready to take the next step. It took coming to Elgin Community College to nurture and grow the seed of determination.

"ECC is where I learned to buckle down and work," Marshall said. "It was like my training center on how to be an adult, and through all the ups and downs, ECC was a pillar in my life."

The first-generation college student came to ECC determined to get on the road toward success. The professional and life skills she acquired, combined with academic and career support, are what ultimately led Marshall to become a realtor. Her career path was unconventional, though, as she initially pursued human resources following the advice of a college advisor. However, Marshall was able to use her attention to detail and analytical skills from her human resources background when she purchased her first real estate property and became a landlord. She still credits her former advisor for getting her on a career path because it led to her role today.

Reflecting on her ECC days, Marshall said she realized that if she wanted to be successful, she would need to ask for help. "When we feel defeated, we want to isolate ourselves and not tell anyone," she said. "When I asked for help, it changed my life."

She received assistance with her FAFSA, which helped alleviate the stress of paying for college. A guidance counselor helped her to get off academic probation and build her confidence as a student. Marshall walked ECC's commencement stage to receive her Associate in Arts degree and then walked two more times with Columbia College Missouri, receiving both a bachelor's and master's degree.

After working in human resources for some of the largest nonprofit organizations in Chicago, she took the skills she had developed and purchased her first investment property, a duplex. Being a landlord came naturally to Marshall, leading her to a career that tapped into her outgoing personality and analytical skills.

As a realtor board CEO, she strives to make an impact in her industry by advocating for more diversity in real estate.

"As one of the very few Black CEOs in the realtor association space, I find myself not only being a physical representation that it's possible for anyone to do anything, but I also recently won the National Association of Realtors Diversity Grant," Marshall said. "This grant is now being used to bring diversity education to my community, which will help us broaden our education, awareness, and cultural sensitivity."

As a first-generation college student who initially felt directionless after dropping out, Marshall found her footing at ECC. This foundation enabled her to flourish and pursue excellence in both her professional and personal endeavors, a path she continues to pursue with determination as she embarks on her second year as a CEO. ■



**Lisa Marshall receives an award from ECC President David Sam at the college's Sensational 75 Brunch on Saturday, May 4.**









# The Photographer

## SANDRO MILLER

**Sandro Miller's story is one of resilience,** passion, and the transformative power of photography. The world-renowned photographer has collaborated with icons such as Michael Jordan and John Malkovich. But his journey began far from the glitz and glamour of success — it started at Elgin Community College (ECC), fueled by a desire to escape a difficult childhood and a deep fascination with capturing the world through a lens.

### Spark Ignited

Miller's childhood was marked by hardship. At five, his father died in a car accident, forcing his mother, who immigrated to the United States from Italy, to raise him alone with limited resources. Miller craved an outlet. Photos, particularly those he saw in magazines during the turbulent '60s and '70s, became his window to the world. Images documenting the Vietnam War, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and John F. Kennedy, and social protests not only educated him but also revealed the power of photography to move hearts and minds.

Although Miller wouldn't confidently know photography was his calling until high school, photos affected him early in life.

"Photography to me was education," Miller said. "Photography was power. I was coming out of a really difficult childhood, and I was looking for something to save me."

Seeing a photograph of the car in which his father was killed had a compelling effect on Miller.

"I think that was the first photograph that really moved me. It was the first time I understood the power of a photograph."

A pivotal moment came at age 16 when Miller stumbled upon a photography magazine featuring the work of Irving Penn. "It was that day in my bedroom that I decided this is what I wanted to do with my life," he recalled.

### Launchpad for Dreams

While prestigious institutions such as Columbia or Yale seemed out of reach, ECC offered a beacon of hope. Miller enrolled, drawn to its robust photography program. Under the guidance of instructors John Grady and Lou Krueger, he dove headfirst into learning the technical aspects and artistic foundations of photography.

"I was there to learn — that was my goal, my dream," Miller said. "Photography was my savior. I had a purpose when I went to

community college."

Grady and Krueger became more than just instructors; they were mentors, recognizing the young man's raw talent and the void left by the loss of his father. They nurtured his talent and encouraged him to pursue his passion. After a year and a half, they saw his immense potential and urged him to take his skills outside the classroom. Years later, ECC would honor his achievements with an honorary Associate of Arts degree.

For Miller, excellence wasn't a destination but a constant pursuit. He began building his extensive photography book collection while still at ECC, a commitment that has grown to include nearly 1,500 books. His work ethic defied the boundaries of a typical day job; it was a 24/7 dedication.

### Facing Obstacles

Life inevitably throws curveballs. In 2011, Miller received a devastating blow — a diagnosis of stage 4 cancer. However, this setback only fueled his creative fire. Some of his most successful projects, including work in Morocco and the iconic "Malkovich, Malkovich, Malkovich: Homage to Photographic Masters" series, were born during his recovery. This series paid tribute to legendary photographers through portraits of John Malkovich reimagined as historical figures such as Marilyn Monroe and Albert Einstein.

Both projects garnered him the prestigious International Photography of the Year Award in 2014 and 2015, propelling him onto the international stage. "That put me on the map of internationally known photographers," reflected Miller.

### Giving Back

In 2022, Miller gave a photography presentation as part of ECC's Humanities Center Speaker Series. He finds immense joy in sharing his knowledge and experience with aspiring photographers and encourages them to chase their passions with unwavering belief and relentless effort.

"Believe in yourself, never give up, and work hard because the world has so much to offer," he advises while noting that finding a career that allows you to give back and make a positive impact is equally important. And in Miller's case, that impact comes not just from his captivating imagery but also from the inspiration he provides to countless others pursuing their dreams. ■







# *The Musician*

# FRANK CATALANO

Grammy Award-winning saxophonist Frank Catalano has graced stages across the globe with his Frank Catalano Quartet jazz band. A former Elgin Community College Jazz Band member, Catalano's musical journey has seen him collaborate with iconic American rock band The Smashing Pumpkins on six albums. His talents have taken him to venues such as the Los Angeles Hollywood Bowl, one of the largest amphitheaters in the world, with a seating capacity of nearly 18,000.

Catalano's musical career kicked off before he received his high school diploma, with a pivotal moment occurring when he was just 14. Encouraged by his Streamwood High School band director, he joined ECC's Jazz Band — one of the college's academic music ensembles.

"Performing in the ECC Jazz Band [from 1991-1996] definitely made me a better saxophonist because I was playing with people older than me who had been playing longer," Catalano said, adding that it nurtured his talent and helped launch his career. "So many things have gone the way they did because I was just having a great time and was experiencing and learning a lot from ECC."

However, Catalano didn't expect that his music career would suddenly stop. After being invited to play at the Grammys in 1994, he was having car trouble, and while tinkering under the hood, he severed his middle finger. At the hospital, the doctor told him his career as a saxophonist would be coming to a close.

Doctors reattached his finger, but Catalano knew he'd have to get reacquainted with the instrument he fell in love with at age six. Enduring multiple surgeries and fueled by an unwavering determination, Catalano embarked on a journey of rehabilitation. Through perseverance, he mastered the instrument once again.

"I kept a good attitude, and the support of many nice, cool people helped a lot," Catalano said. "The ECC faculty and staff visited me, which really meant something."

Now in his forties, Catalano attributes much of his success to his formative years with the ECC Jazz Band. Since leaving ECC, he has shared stages with legends such as Tony Bennett and Miles Davis. He worked with Billy Corgan of The Smashing Pumpkins on his new album, "Set Me Free," which will be available in July. This past year, Catalano visited Spain, performing in Majorca and Madrid.

Catalano believes he was fortunate to figure out what he loved and wanted to do with his life at a very young age. His passion for the saxophone, along with the support of family, friends, and mentors, instilled in him that he could overcome any obstacle.

"When you really know what you want to do, you have to go for it 110% and never take 'no' for an answer," he said. "If you don't know what you want yet, that's okay! Don't rush into anything. Take your time to explore, and what you're passionate about will present itself to you." ■



**Frank Catalano plays his saxophone at the House Pub in St. Charles, IL.**



# "Bright Futures" campaign empowers students to succeed

**E**lgin Community College Foundation initiated the public phase of a student-centered "Bright Futures" fundraising campaign in December 2023 to help more students achieve their dreams. Despite the affordability and accessibility offered by community colleges, many students increasingly require assistance to persist in pursuing higher education.

Bright Futures, which provided scholarships for 372 students in the last year, directly addresses students' needs through personalized coaching, financial support, and other resources. Students come to ECC with unique stories and dreams that guide their educational pursuits. With support from Bright Futures, scholarship recipients have the drive and determination to reach their goals, find their futures, and seal their paths to success.

The Bright Futures initiative also aims to strengthen the workforce in the surrounding region. Financial support is provided to many students focused on careers that meet critical workforce needs, including health care, truck driving, automotive mechanics, welding specialists, and more. Here are three students who have benefitted from recent foundation support.

## **Brenda Rogel**

Like many first-generation college students, ECC student Brenda Rogel initially felt uncertain about navigating college and nervous about the financial burden it placed solely on her shoulders. However, a scholarship from the ECC Foundation gave her the financial assistance she needed and infused her with the confidence necessary to thrive.

"Thanks to the ECC Foundation and donors, I have the opportunity to have an education and dream big with my eyes open," Rogel said.

Building upon her commitment to ECC, Rogel took on the role of treasurer for the student body government this past year. She is on track to graduate with an Associate in Arts degree and plans to transfer to a four-year university to pursue accounting.

## **Elija Miskic**

Elija Miskic began the welding program at ECC in the spring of 2022. A scholarship from the ECC Foundation allowed him to take a heavier credit load per semester than he previously thought possible.

"The scholarship reduced the juggling act of my college financial life, allowing me to take more classes without worrying about going into debt," Miskic said. With less financial strain on his shoulders, Miskic immersed himself further into what welding at ECC could offer him and competed in the Skills USA competition for individual welding and welding sculpture.

## **Marissa Barker**

ECC alum Marissa Barker, of St. Charles, graduated from the college in August of 2021 with an Associate in Science degree and a Vocational Specialist certificate in bookkeeping.

"Receiving this scholarship helped me cross the finish line debt-free, but it also showed me that other people believed in my ability to succeed in school and change my career path," Barker said.

Securing a job in construction bookkeeping in April of 2022, Barker spent about a year gaining experience before taking the entrepreneurial leap to become her own boss. Collaborating with her former employer, she co-founded MTS Contractor Services, Inc.

She credits ECC for helping her hone her skills in project



**Brenda Rogel**

management and orchestrating various elements from inception to completion.

"ECC armed me with a solid knowledge of accounting and bookkeeping," Barker said, adding that these skills were essential for managing the administrative aspects of her business.

## **Continued Success**

The Bright Futures campaign has raised well over \$2 million with the ultimate goal of \$3 million by this fall. This impactful initiative reflects the ECC Foundation's commitment to student success and the economic growth of the Fox Valley region.

"The Bright Futures campaign is helping our students enhance their ability to remain in school, complete their academic course of study, and reach the graduation stage," said Susan Taylor-Demming, executive director of institutional advancement and the ECC Foundation. "Many of our students remain in the Fox Valley region and strongly contribute to its economy."

## **LEARN MORE**

Visit [elgin.edu/brightfutures](https://elgin.edu/brightfutures) to learn more about how you can contribute to the Bright Futures campaign and empower future generations to achieve academic and career success.



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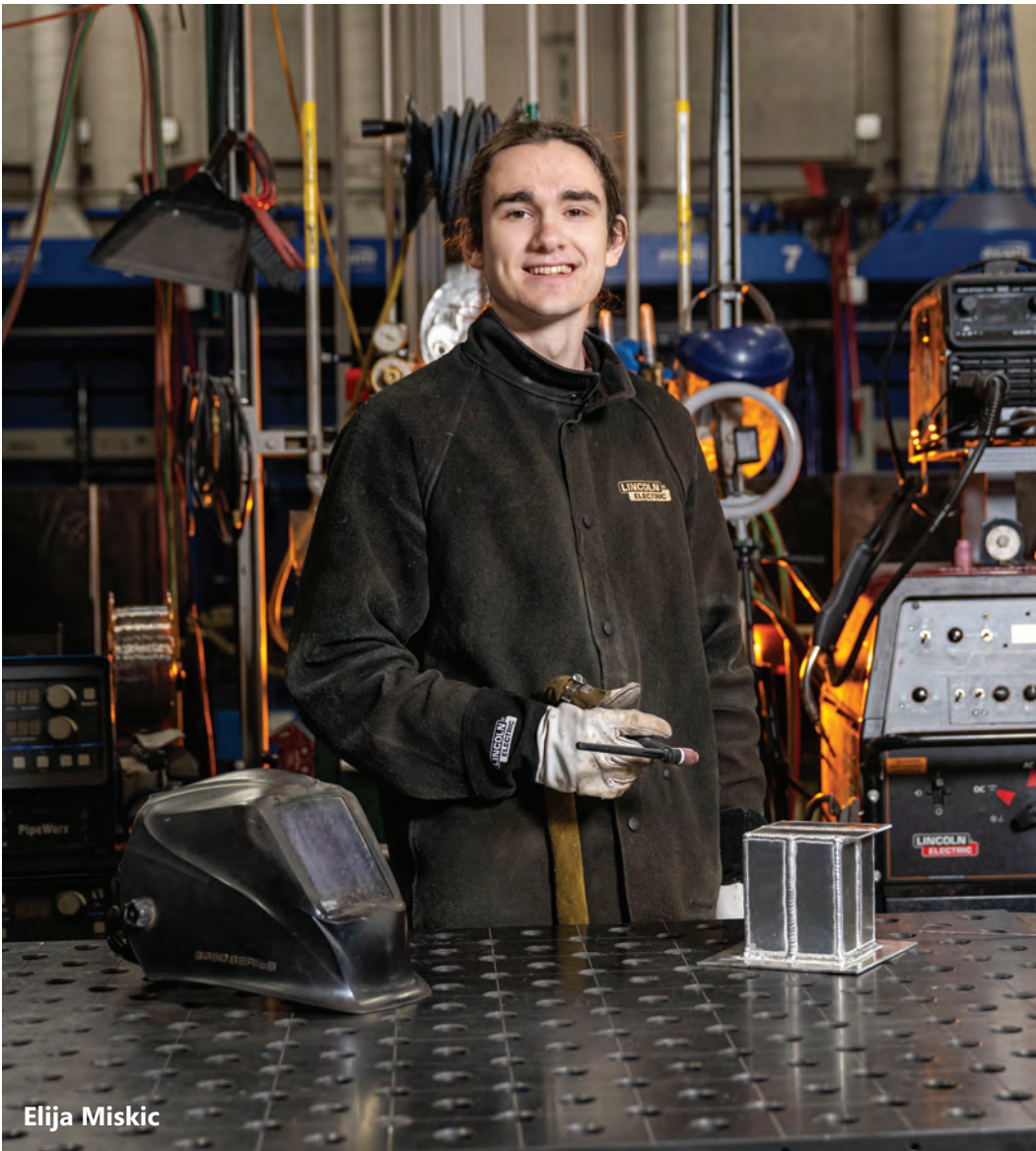
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**Elija Miskic**



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