KCC’s 2014 Valedictorian: Rachel Lazar

By Armin Rebihic

The curiosity of this year’s Valedictorian was peaked in her first class at Kingsborough and it never let up. From someone who never attended high school, she earned the highest honor the college has to offer.

Rachel Lazar, 21, maintained a 4.00 GPA, was heavily involved with the Honors program and produced two papers that were published in “Distinctions,” the Honors Journal.

“When I started KCC, I was frightened because I never really went to high school,” said Lazar. “And even though when I started school, I was 19, which is the typical age that most people go to college, I hadn’t finished an academic year since eighth grade, so I had no idea what to expect – if I would like it or do well; and I was really scared.”

Growing up in California and moving to upstate New York when she was 11, Lazar was in and out of different programs throughout her life, never finishing high school. She completed her GED in 2010 and started at KCC in 2012.

She achieved much recognition for her work. Notably, Lazar received the prestigious Jack Kent Cooke scholarship, which is awarded to up to 75 undergraduate transfer students nationwide each year.

Lazar also presented a paper diagnosing...
Ariel, from Disney’s “The Little Mermaid,” with compulsive hoarding disorder, at the KCC Honors Symposium and at the Northeast Regional Honors Conference.

Her other paper, “Are People Born Evil” looks at the psychological and neurobiological roots of evil, while primarily looking at whether people can be born evil, to determine if they can or cannot. Her studies showed people cannot be born evil.

She is headed to Columbia University to pursue degrees in Psychology and Pre-Med, and is thinking about entering the fields of psychology or psychiatry.

“All of this happened because I tried — because I stepped out of my comfort zone and I took that first class in the “T” Building, having no idea what to expect — I just went to class and listened and everything unfolded,” said Lazar. “We don’t know what we can do until we try.”
By Devin Fagan

For Arooj Alam — a member of the Honors club and Secretary of Phi Theta Kappa — coming to the United States was just the introduction to dealing with obstacles.

“I lived a life of luxury and pleasure. Living a life of comfort had made me quite ignorant and I wasn’t aware of other people’s problems. I didn’t really have any significant goals because I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do with my life,” said Alam. “All of this changed when my family and I moved.”

Born and raised in Kuwait, Alam lived an easygoing lifestyle with the help of her hard-working parents until she moved to the United States eight years ago.

“I had to struggle and work hard to get the things I wanted. I started appreciating the simple things in life and also started becoming more aware of people’s problems,” she proclaimed. “I learned to sympathize and empathize with others and wanted to help them. Yet I still wasn’t sure what I wanted to do with myself.”

She learned the answer to her questions when she took an introductory college-level psychology class. She fell in love with psychology and the concept of love and marriage.

The personal connection she felt to the subject matter led her to want to be a marriage counselor.

In 2012 she graduated as valedictorian of her graduating class at Abraham Lincoln High School and decided to attend Kingsborough to see where it could take her.

“Being accepted into the Kingsborough Presidential Scholars Honors Program was a stroke of good luck. I never expected that I would get to know so many wonderful professors and staff members,” said Alam. “That I would make some very dear and life-long friends and that I would learn so much. Being part of the Honors Program has truly been a blessing.”

As she leaves KCC, she does so with many honors. She earned a Presidential Scholars Certificate for earning 30 credits in honors coursework and she was one of three students to receive an Honors Program Award in recognition of her outstanding work both in the classroom and in honors-related activities.

She plans to transfer to Brooklyn College’s Honors Program and continue challenging herself as a student. She hopes to get her Ph.D. in Psychology and work as a Marriage Counselor in private practice.
Phi Theta Kappa – The Two-Year College Honor Society, held its 47th annual induction ceremony this past spring.

This esteemed affair recognized 380 Kingsborough students for their academic efforts – earning a 3.50 GPA with no remedial needs.

KCC’s Xi Kappa Chapter appointed its 2014 - 2015 chapter offices at the ceremony. Notably, Diane Haynes, former treasurer for the 2013-2014 office, became president of the organization.

The exiting Xi Kappa Chapter president, Ashley Ikromova, played an active role in her work with fellow officers by making sure that members were well informed and provided with all the opportunities that Phi Theta Kappa has to offer.

Haynes and Niaz Mosharraf, Vice President of Leadership, were the Masters of Ceremony for this year’s induction. They spoke in front of a large audience, ensuring that the ceremony flowed exceptionally well.

The two pointed out that Phi Theta Kappa provides its members with many scholarship opportunities which enable members who require financial help to attend a university of their choice.

They also spoke about the life-long learning experiences and friendships the organization offers.

“I find that Phi Theta Kappa is a great outlet for students who are engaged in academic affairs who want to excel,” Haynes stated. “It’s a great environment to work on your leadership skills and to network, and meet new people; I feel like it’s my second family.”

During the induction ceremony, every inducted student had the opportunity to cross the stage and state his/her name and major.

Many added a personal, and at times an inspirational message which usually reflected upon the effort they put in to reach this achievement and the support they received from family and friends.

“The ceremony was important in regards to how it showcases all the hard work that you have put in while being in a two-year college,” said Haynes. “Kingsborough, and you, share a feeling of great pride for what you did, and everyone who is here this evening is present to acknowledge your hard work and great accomplishment.”
Kingsborough Students Win Two Seats in Phi Theta Kappa’s New York Regional Office

By Armin Rebihic

Phi Theta Kappa’s New York Region elected its 2014 - 2015 officers to take the helm of the upcoming year’s agenda at Corning, New York this spring. Among the six newly appointed positions, two seats were won by two of Kingsborough’s very own.

Rida Khan, an aspiring Nursing student at the college’s Honors Program was elected as the Executive Secretary.

“If it wasn’t for my parents, I wouldn’t be able to step out of my cultural boundaries and even go to Corning,” said Khan, reflecting on her election. “I’m also thankful to Ashley Ikromova (Xi Kappa President) because she gave me the push I needed.”

Khan will be responsible for taking minutes at all the regional meetings and coordinating administrative tasks.

Niaz Mosharraf, the former Vice President of Leadership at the Xi Kappa Chapter of Kingsborough, was elected as the Regional Alumni Representative.

“This is truly an honor — one through which I can continue to give back to Kingsborough even after my graduation,” said Mosharraf. “And I must credit this success to Ashley Ikromova and Professor Caterina Pierre, both of whom were great supporters through this whole process.”

He will be responsible for facilitating the smooth communication between colleges and chapters for not only the current Phi Theta Kappa members, but also for the alumni of the Region.

The new officers set a few goals including a campaign to increase recruitment.

Both will play a key role in this as Khan will be responsible for much of the outreach and social networking aspects and Mosharraf will put his attention behind bringing back the Phi Theta Kappa regional newsletter, “Excelsior,” as well as creating a new recruitment video for the region. Both the newsletter and the video will be a collaborative project with pieces from chapters of the entire region.

The newly elected officers will also be attending this year’s Phi Theta Kappa Honors Institute at Washington University in St. Louis in order to bring back knowledge and experience about this year’s Honors Study Topics and the Honors in Action projects.

Join KCC’S Xi Kappa Chapter Find out more in Room M-386
Being part of the Salzburg Global Ethics course this past spring was a blessing. This program is a life-changing experience and a great opportunity for students to both learn and grow as individuals.

PHI 79 is specifically designed to enable students to become more open-minded, develop leadership skills and connect with like-minded people. It is a challenging, yet rewarding experience and those who have previously been part of this program testify that they have become better students and individuals thanks to this opportunity.

While traveling to Salzburg, Austria is a major component of this program, the experience is not just about the travel. It is about teaching our peers and learning from them. It is about taking charge, showing the world what each student is capable of and bringing out the best in yourself.

The class, comprised of 12 students, is divided into three groups of four, and each student is responsible for working with their group members and creating summaries of chapters they read from the required texts for this class.

Students are also responsible for sharing their research and opinions about the chapter readings with their classmates, as well as learning from all of their classmates’ findings.

The coursework is mainly directed towards important global issues in the modern world such as poverty, economics and international law, etcetera.

During the global ethics seminar in Salzburg, students were expected to attend the lectures, discussions and presentations by leading experts from all over the world.

This experience is about making connections with fellow high-achieving students and building long lasting friendships.
Honors Professor: Dr. Rick Armstrong

By Devin Fagan

They say a cluttered desk is the sign of a busy mind. The English, Political Science and Model United Nations professor, Dr. Rick Armstrong, has a lot on his plate and for good reasons. He loves to teach and most of all, he loves to learn.

“I love the interaction, the back and forth — it can create a new level of awareness; new skills and new knowledge in a student,” said Professor Armstrong. “To see a student progressing and waking up to the appreciation of learning, makes my day.”

Dr. Armstrong was born in San Francisco, California. Since birth, he has always been a suburban type of guy with a city boy heart.

A Bay Area resident, Dr. Armstrong lived in a town that literally took three minutes to drive through.

Armstrong graduated from high school and was accepted into the University of California, Berkeley.

While taking courses in English at the university, he made an amazing discovery.

“I had an incredible English professor at the time and we read James Baldwin, Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence. We read about nonconformity and how most men live life in quiet desperation and things like that,” he recalled.

Dr. Armstrong continued, “That was great, and I thought ‘I want to do this,’ I want to teach people how to read, how to write, how to express themselves; and then I said ‘okay, I’ll be an English major.’”

After his graduation, he earned his Masters in English from SUNY Stony Brook, and later earned his Ph.D. at CUNY Graduate Center in English Literature. His dissertation was on American Literature and Evolutionary Theory.

He recently marked his tenth year of teaching at Kingsborough and will have the three-year anniversary of his radio show on KCC’s WKRB 90.3, called “Cinematic Soundscapes” this October.

The show is a freeform, film music segment where he plays all types of music, especially soundtracks from movies.

“Cinematic Soundscapes” runs all year, usually on Sundays from 5pm-7pm; over the summer, it is on from 1pm-3pm.

His love of literature and film does not stop there. Dr. Armstrong also published a book about one of his favorite film directors, titled “Robert Altman: Critical Essays.”

KCC’s 2014 NMUN Delegates Share Their Thoughts

“I feel the model UN not only unites schools, but different countries too. It’s just this feeling of empowerment when you have different individuals close to your age representing topics such as peace, genocide or open borders. I think it represents the empowerment of individuals.”

- Jennifer Faybusovich

“It was an extravagant and great experience. I just loved talking to people and debating with other communities from different countries about issues that are going on internationally and figuring out resolutions — which really impacts our understanding of what’s going on.”

- Anthony Chatman
The Extra Mile Staff

Niaz Mosharraf
is a student of Journalism and Print Media at Kingsborough. He is also the Editor of KCC’s campus newspaper, “Scepter.”

Mosharraf is involved in various other organizations at KCC such as “Antheon,” “Odyssey” and Phi Theta Kappa.

Making the best of the many incredible opportunities offered by the Honors Program, he has accomplished quite a few significant feats at KCC — becoming a Salzburg Scholar, to name one.

Ashley Parsaram
is a student in Kingsborough’s Biology Program. She is the Production Editor of “Scepter” as well as the first Editor-in-Chief of “Antheon,” KCC’s award winning Journal of the Arts.

Parsaram is an honored member of Sigma Alpha Pi and the recipient of the NELA (the National Exemplary Leadership Award).

She strives to obtain a Bachelor’s in Nursing and work both nationally and internationally in impoverished and conflict regions.

Parsaram will continue to work on various print, design and web productions as she has found a great new passion for it through her many notable works at KCC.

Devin Fagan
is a second-year Journalism student at Kingsborough. He is the current Managing Editor and has been a dedicated member of “Scepter” during his tenure at KCC.

He is also one of the two Chief Photographers at the newspaper and has an already growing photography business on the side.

He plans to continue his education in a four-year college and earn a Bachelor’s degree in Journalism, with a minor in Business.

Fagan hopes to build a career in Journalism and Photography with his current team at “Scepter” and travel more in his future.

Armin Rebihic
is a first-year Journalism student. He is one of the two Associate Editors at “Scepter.”

Although he has only recently became involved with the various publications at the school, Rebihic has accomplished much in a short time with hard work and dedication.

With evidence of an already promising future at the college, he plans to graduate with a degree in Journalism and Print Media.

Ultimately, after traveling a bit, Rebihic would like to use all his experiences in life and in Journalism to become a novelist.