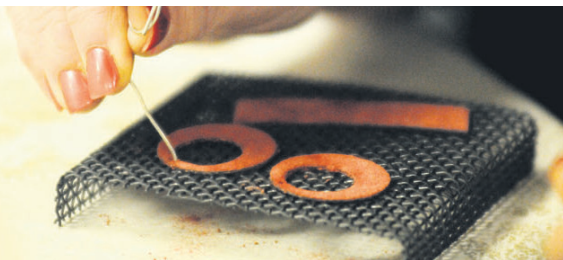


GLEAMING ON WEBSTER STREET

ART STUDIO OFFERS VISITORS TO CITY'S DOWNTOWN A BRIGHT ALTERNATIVE.
LIFESTYLE/1C



On a roll?

SABRES LOOK TO KEEP WIN STREAK ALIVE IN VANCOUVER
SPORTS/1B

TONAWANDA NEWS SUNDAY



Fish, not fried

SOME ALTERNATIVES TO THE TRADITIONAL LENTEN FISH FRY
LIFESTYLE/8C

SUNDAY, MARCH 4, 2012

WWW.TONAWANDA-NEWS.COM

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DNA BANK

The state weighs expanding its DNA database to include samples from every person convicted of a crime. **LOCAL, 3A**

TODAY & TOMORROW

Today

- "The Irish Rovers" will perform at 4 p.m. today at the Riviera Theatre, 67 Webster St., North Tonawanda.

Monday

- A breast cancer telephone support group will connect from noon to 1:30 p.m. for eight Mondays, ending March 19. To register, call 516-877-4314.

3 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW TODAY

1 Emergency crews desperately search for survivors after a violent wave of Midwest and Southern storms completely flattens some rural communities leaving behind a trail of destruction.

2 BP's settlement deal with thousands of victims of the 2010 Gulf oil spill is a major step toward putting the worst oil spill in U.S. history behind it. BP says it will not have to increase the \$37.2 billion it has set aside to pay for the spill.

3 Gov. Andrew Cuomo wants to devote \$25 million of a job creation fund to expand broadband Internet access to rural upstate and underserved urban areas of New York that could create jobs and potentially provide far more cellular telephone coverage to the Adirondacks. **STATE, 3A**

WHERE TO TURN

STATE LOTTERIES
Please see page 3A

AREA OBITUARIES
Please see page 4A

WEATHER
Please see page 2A

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Crossword	5C
Obituaries	4-5A
Opinion	8A
Police	3A
Sports	1-8B
Weather	2A

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FOCUS: COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A JOB GUARANTEE

In era defined by industrial decline, ECC's industrial technology program has 100 percent job placement rate



DAN CAPPELLAZZO/NEWS

ATTENTION: Erie Community College student Cassandra Martin of Akron, an industrial technology student, works at the college's North Campus in Williamsville.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In his State of the Union address, President Obama touted partnerships between community colleges and local businesses to increase training for specialized employment. In reaction to that trend, The Tonawanda News is taking a look at local community colleges, businesses and programs that are doing just that. This installment focuses on Erie Community College and its Machining and Manufacturing Alliance.

BY JILL KEPPELER
jill.keppeler@tonawanda-news.com

Eight years ago, fewer than 10 students were enrolled in the industrial technology department at Erie Community College and it looked like the program would follow the industries and jobs of yesterday, and disappear. Against the backdrop of a generation defined by America's industrial decline and

growing up in a Rust Belt region that has experienced that rapid descent firsthand, encouraging young people to learn factory work was, to say the least, a tough sell.

But in a remarkable turn, not only has that program rebounded, it now boasts what amounts to a guaranteed job for every graduate.

And with the nation at large now grappling with the kind of sustained unemployment that Western New Yorkers have known for generations, the story of what ECC and the Western New York business community have done offers some much-needed light at the end of the tunnel.

'Mind-boggling' success

Today, not only is the industrial technology program thriving with more than 100 students, but — at a time and in a

place where unemployment is nearly 8 percent — it has a 100 percent job placement rate for its students.

The difference can be chalked up to the 2004 creation of the Machining and Manufacturing Alliance, said Nate Witkowski, instructor and chairman of the industrial technology department, who helped set up the MMA. In the beginning, ECC officials sat down with representatives of about local 30 industrial companies and asked what they were looking for in employees.

"We asked them, 'What would you like people coming to work for you to know what to

SEE COLLEGES ON PAGE 6A

Part two

Niagara County Community College will run March 11

ECC industrial technology students look to the future

BY JILL KEPPELER
jill.keppeler@tonawanda-news.com

For 20 years, Kevin Nicholls of North Tonawanda worked as a model maker for New York state industries.

And then, abruptly, he didn't. "I used to work for Buffalo China and then worked for Syracuse China, and both factories closed down," he said. "All those kinds of jobs were exported."

"I had a 20-year career, and all of a sudden it's taken away. I had

to find a new career."

Today, Nicholls, 41, is in his third semester of working toward an associate's degree in industrial technology at Erie Community College — and things are looking much more promising on the job market.

"When I go looking for jobs online, for (computer-assisted design), their main interest is they want an engineer with a bachelor's degree. It was more practical for me to get an associate's degree," he said. "I kind of

have to change my career, so I chose this route."

Nicholls' story is fairly typical for the students in ECC's industrial technology program, instructor and department chairman Nate Witkowski said. The age breakdown for the program tends to be about 80 percent older students (who've already been in the workforce for a while) vs. about 20 percent recent high school graduates.

SEE ECC ON PAGE 6A

■ NATION

Limbaugh apologizes to student

INSULT: Talk show host loses face, advertisers over choice of words.

BY PHILIP ELLIOTT
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh apologized Saturday to a Georgetown University law student he had branded a "slut" and "prostitute" after fellow Republicans as well as Democrats criticized him and several advertisers left his program.

The student, Sandra Fluke, had testified to congressional Democrats in support of their national health care policy that would compel her college to offer health plans that cover her birth control.

"My choice of words was not the best, and in the attempt to be humorous, I created a national stir," Limbaugh said on his website. "I sincerely apologize to Ms. Fluke for the insulting word choices."

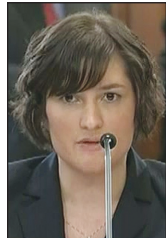
Attempts to reach Fluke by telephone and email were unsuccessful.

Fluke had been invited to testify to a House committee about her school's health care plan that does not include contraception. Republican lawmakers barred her from testifying during that hearing, but Democrats invited her back and she spoke to the Democratic lawmakers at an unofficial session.

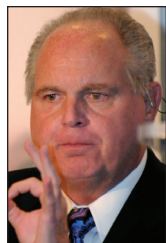
President Barack Obama, whose landmark health care overhaul requires many institutions to provide birth control coverage, telephoned her from the Oval Office on Friday to express his support.

The issue has been much debated in the presidential race, with Republican candidates particularly criticizing the Obama plan's requirements on such employers as Catholic hospitals. Democrats — and many Republican leaders, too — have suggested the issue could energize women to vote for Obama and other Democrats in November.

Limbaugh was not swayed by Fluke's statements before the House panel.



Sandra Fluke
Law student



Rush Limbaugh
Talk show host

Cuomo's \$1 billion question has an easy answer

Since his State of the State address a month ago, much has been written about Gov. Andrew Cuomo's plan to offer up to \$1 billion in economic assistance to jump-start Buffalo's generations-long lagging economy. Perhaps the best of what has been written was by veteran investigative reporter James Heaney a few weeks back in Artvoice. Heaney's piece (a link to which will appear with the online version of this column at www.tonawanda-news.com) examined the various approaches the

governor might take with this bold proclamation.

Cuomo has promised that the Buffalo Billion won't be frittered away on lots of little projects that lack cohesion or a larger focus. This substantial pile of cash, according to the governor, is going to be used to swing for the

fences. He hasn't said what that big ticket item might be. In fact, he has expressly said he won't be telling us what it is. Instead, he will rely on a newly formed Regional Economic Development Committee to identify how the money should be spent.

But reading between the lines, he knows exactly what he's doing — and it's a plan we've heard before.

With that in mind, I did some digging around to see just what this all means.

My first question: Is this money specifically for Buffalo or is it regional?

The governor's speech seemed to imply it was focused tightly on Buffalo, but in subsequent conversations I've had with people, everyone seems to agree that Cuomo, the former secretary of Housing and Urban Development, isn't solely pitching an urban revival. Projects with regional benefits will be considered regardless of where they're located.

One source, who asked not to be identified, described a meeting between Cuomo and the local delegation of

lawmakers, during which Cuomo promised explicitly that the Buffalo Billion was really a Western New York Billion. The source quoted Cuomo, speaking to the delegation at his office in the Capitol in Albany, as saying, "This is regional. Jobs outside the city (of Buffalo) will benefit the city."

Others I've spoken to — and others who have said as much in the media — agreed this is a regional approach, not just a Buffalo thing, which is good news for the Tonawandas.

SEE DUVALL ON PAGE 6A



ERIC
DuVall