



## Forward Thinking Moving forward safely in a time of adversity



Great victory is the result of great struggle. The global struggle against COVID-19 is a difficult one that we will overcome. We must push forward in the midst of adversity. We must do so safely. We must do so with steadfast resolve because we have purpose.

Healthcare workers are being trained to promote healing. Public safety professionals are engaged in learning environments as they prepare to serve our communities. Many over-the-road hours are being logged by future truck drivers who will keep our economy moving. Networks and business functions are on the minds of hundreds of learners in programs like computer information systems, business management and accounting. The roaring industrial and manufacturing sector has engineers, air conditioning technicians, welders, mechanics and others being made ready to take their place. Thousands are gaining literacy and learning to communicate in English for the first time in order to join in this fight for a better life, a sense of fulfillment and a brighter future.

We are a vast college community of students, educators and community partners. We are united and committed to our cause. We are GPTC. We will win.

Here's to a healthy and successful Fall Semester...Keep moving FORWARD!

— Dr. Tavaraz Holston, President

# GPTC perseveres despite pandemic



By Justin Clay

When Janice Pressley, Medical Assisting program instructor, walked into her classroom at the DeKalb Campus, after months of absence, she thought about the long road of change ahead.

For Georgia Piedmont Technical College (GPTC) faculty, returning to campus during the novel Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic required a major shift in instruction due to challenges that arose. "The social distancing and limited lab were the most challenging," Pressley said. "Mostly because of the size of the lab and the skills [students learn] are practiced on each other."

Despite these challenges, faculty persevered. For Welding Technology instructor Willie Harvey, clearing the hurdles presented by the pandemic involved several measures.

"To overcome these challenges," Harvey explained, "we follow the protocol put in place by our administration first, exercise good judgment for personal safety, pay attention to the experts' recommendations and work from home as much as possible."

In addition to Medical Assisting and Welding Technology, other programs like Clinical Laboratory Technology (CLT), Opticianry and Phlebotomy, led

by instructors Ibsa Abdi, Lanard Atkins and Anita Khoram respectively, returned to campus to carry out their required labs.

"The biggest challenge we face is not being able to hold lab sessions at once," Khoram said. "Our students have to be divided into two groups in order to adhere to social distancing."

The road ahead for the CLT program during the era of COVID-19 does not, however, come without another challenge. "Our profession is at a critical crossroad of employee shortages," Khoram said. "During the current pandemic, there are roughly 310,000 medical laboratory professionals in the U.S.; as Medical Laboratory Scientist Megan Ledford pointed out, that's about one laboratory professional for every 1,130 citizens in this country."

"We can and must do better for healthcare," she added.

For President Tavaraz Holston, EdD, one goal remains clear. "Above all else, protecting the health, safety and well-being of our students while on campus—during a pandemic or not—is paramount," he said. "They must learn and grow to gain the skills required to be successful in the workforce; therefore, we will take the necessary measures to facilitate learning in a safe manner."



**Masking Up** GPTC instructors and students persevere in the ongoing pandemic and continue building their skills on campus, all the while remaining safe by wearing masks and practicing social distancing.

## Foundation receives new STEM-focused scholarship



CERM presents check to President Holston

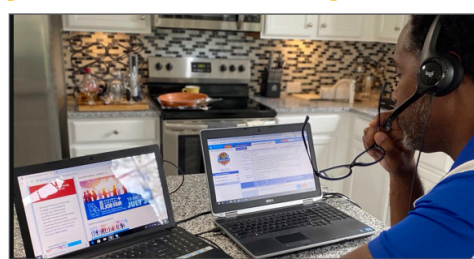
By Jana Wiggins

A \$25,000 donation from Corporate Environmental Risk Management (CERM) will ease the financial burdens for two GPTC students each semester over the next five years through the new Reese-Walker STEM Scholarship.

Students in over 30 computer, engineering, mathematics and science technologies programs and with at least a 3.0 GPA will be eligible to apply. An additional contribution to the GPTC Foundation will be used as general support of the college's workforce development mission.

CERM Founder Albert Edwards joined GPTC representatives for the check presentation on Aug. 18.

## GPTC holds first-ever virtual job fair with safety in mind



Pollard assists jobseekers virtually from home.

By Jana Wiggins

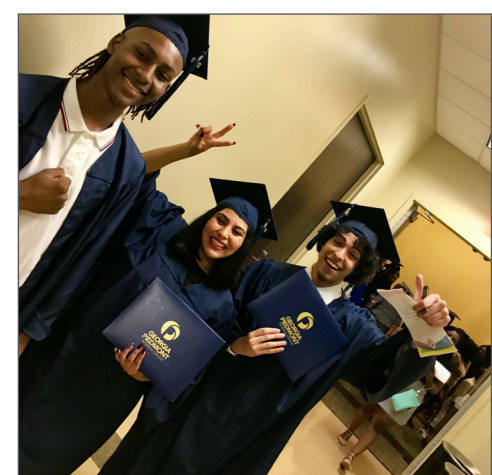
For the first time in GPTC history, more than 46 employers and 350 jobseekers attended our annual job fair — from their keyboards and webcams. The Regional+Virtual Job Fair 2020 was a reimagining of our traditional, in-person community job fair into an online one in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employers met job candidates in exclusive online chat rooms provided by CareerEco Virtual Events on July 30. GPTC's partners at the Newton County and Walton County development authorities, the Covington-Newton Chamber, NiftyHire and WorkSource Georgia provided support for the event.

"The virtual job fair was a great success. It provided a new platform for both employers and job candidates to connect and collaborate on potential job openings," said GPTC Business and Industry Coordinator Kelly Pollard, who oversaw the live event from his home kitchen island.

The next virtual job fair is scheduled for Oct. 9.

## Adult Ed part of state pilot effort for virtual admissions



Students celebrate at 2019 GED Graduation.

By Jana Wiggins

Citizens in DeKalb, Newton and Rockdale counties ready to earn a GED® diploma or improve English language proficiency can now enroll virtually — thanks in part to GPTC's involvement in Georgia's development of a new online registration process.

"We're committed to leading the way statewide to develop a fully-functioning, online adult education program," said Dr. Meghan McBride, VP of adult education. "Our virtual enrollment process allows students to register, get documents notarized and take a pre-test without having to come to campus."

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration / Sept. 16 & 17**  
Starts at 11:30 AM & 5 PM for DeKalb (9/16) & 11:30 AM for Newton (9/17) campus.
- **Voters Registration Drive / Sept. 21-25**  
Stay tuned for more information.
- **Regional + Virtual Job Fair / Oct. 9**  
Registration link coming soon.

# Alumni finds career success through GPTC



Quaves McClenton

Contributed by Cory Thompson

Three years ago, Quaves McClenton found himself facing a skill-set challenge. He graduated a dozen years earlier with a bachelor's degree in graphic design and a certificate in web development. But that wasn't enough to keep up with an evolving industry. "Things are starting to change where I need to get more in-depth with technology; I don't want to be left behind," he said. That's what led him to look at Georgia Piedmont's computer programming degree. "Out of all

the programs I've seen at different schools, GPTC was one of the most economical and affordable and had the backing of federal loans."

When federal financial assistance ended, the 39-year-old Decatur resident says his academic dream almost derailed. So, he turned to the GPTC Foundation and its scholarships for assistance. He credits the Foundation's Deborah White for helping him navigate the financial gap. "She has been like a godsend for me, because she helped me along

the way to finish and complete my program," he added. McClenton also treasures the insight of his instructors like Dr. Maylon Walker and Mike Jones. He says they provide knowledge and expertise and students should take advantage of their guidance.

With his new-found degree and added skills, McClenton has been working as a printer at Prima Atlanta. He credits GPTC with giving him an edge in a competitive job market. "It's put me ahead of the curve...I have a lot more (job) options now."

## Hotseat with Selina James: Regional Transportation Training Center Director



Selina James

### Going Above & Beyond

Selina is a dynamic professional, who is extremely talented and well respected by her peers and students. Mrs. James has been with GPTC for over 15 years and is one of only a small minority of directors (TCSG) that are female. With over 25-plus years in the field as a professional driver, she provides leadership, management and teaches as the director to Metro Atlanta's largest transportation training center.

— Irvin Clark, EdD, Vice President, Economic Development

### Favorite book?

*The Notebook* by Nicholas Sparks

### Favorite food?

Mexican food

### Your favorite memory?

The birth of my children

### What would be your life's theme song?

*Que Sera, Sera*

### Your go-to movie?

*The Fast and Furious* franchise (Go figure!)

### What are you reading right now?

*The Total Money Makeover* by Dave Ramsey

### Favorite quote?

Accept people for who they are (rather than who you want them to be)  
— Anonymous

### Your favorite part of your job?

*The smiles of our students when they complete their program.*

