

# ALUMNI CIRCUIT

PHOTOS: SCOTT JONES PHOTOGRAPHY



## EXCELLENCE HONORED

Each year, a highlight of the Salute to Engineering Excellence sponsored by Newark College of Engineering is the presentation of Outstanding Alumni Awards. The ceremony also spotlights a notable corporate partner and NCE students who include exceptional seniors – young men and women soon to join the generations of proud NJIT alumni.

For 2012, four NCE graduates garnered awards for their engineering and entrepreneurial achievements at the March event.



Joseph A. Branco

Alumnus **Joseph A. Branco** is president of the construction company EIC Associates. He's responsible for general administration of the firm, with special emphasis on finance, bonding and insurance. Branco, who has two degrees from NCE – a 1974 bachelor's in civil engineering and a 1977 degree in architecture – co-founded the firm in 1998.

Branco launched EIC with **Andre B. Ameer**, who earned his NCE bachelor's in civil engineering in 1978. Ameer, executive vice president of EIC, is responsible for all of the firm's field construction operations. Before founding EIC, both Branco and Ameer worked for EE Cruz and Company, a firm owned by 1963 civil engineering alum Edward Cruz that hires many NCE graduates.

"We talked about starting a business, so we decided to stop talking and do it," says Ameer. "All we had was our engineering knowledge, but more importantly engineers have a certain mentality. We are problem solvers, whether it's in business or in construction. We never throw in the

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– Andre B. Ameer

towel. We always get the job done. That's what helped our business."

Ameer characterizes EIC as a medium-sized construction company that excels at specialty construction projects. Recently, for instance, the firm constructed a park, called Pier C, which extends over the Hudson River on the Hoboken waterfront. The project involved doing considerable marine work, an EIC specialty. EIC also dredged and cleaned up a contaminated tract of land in Bayonne; that land is now the Bayonne Golf Club.



Andre B. Ameer

**Bhavesh Adani** is executive vice president and co-founder of cyberThink, Inc. The firm provides information technology services to companies in the pharmaceutical, financial and computer industries. Started in 1996, the company now employs more than 300 people in the United States and India. Adani received a master's degree in electrical engineering from NCE in 1988.

To go from a cash-strapped graduate student to a leader of a major tech company is no small feat, and Adani credits NCE for helping him launch his career. His big break came, he

says, during his second semester when, on the basis of his academic achievement, NCE awarded him a teaching assistantship. That job came just as his bank loan was running dry.

"I had just eight dollars left in my pocket and the teaching-assistant job allowed me to continue my education uninterrupted," Adani recalls. "I'm grateful to NCE for that. My NCE education also served as a valuable springboard into the tough job market. It enabled me to seek challenging positions in companies such as JP Morgan, AT&T and Transax Systems."

Just before starting cyberThink in 1996, Adani worked as a database administrator and project manager for Transax Systems. He played a major role in building the first Windows-based tariff and rate-retrieval system. Three colleagues he met at Transax would become his founding cyberThink partners. Adani says the four of them came up with



Bhavesh Adani

the idea for cyberThink during "an informal chat over lunch."

**Leon K. Baptiste** is president and chief executive officer of LB Electric Co. His firm designs,



installs and maintains conventional and alternative electrical systems for companies, schools, hospitals and government agencies, in addition to providing other related services.

Baptiste graduated from NCE in 1991 with a degree in electrical engineering and started his company at the NJIT Enterprise Development Center. He also received a 2012 Achievement Award from the NJIT Alumni Association, and there's more about his accomplishments in this issue.

This year's Outstanding Corporate Partnership Award was presented to Valcor Engineering Corporation, a supplier of fluid-control components to clients in the aerospace, nuclear, industrial and scientific fields. Valcor was founded by the late **Morton A. Krietchman**, who graduated from NCE in 1944 with a degree in mechanical engineering. Krietchman founded Valcor in 1951 in a small industrial loft in Newark. For many years, Valcor has provided generous scholarship support for NJIT mechanical engineering majors.

Among the outstanding NCE seniors honored was **Julia Gayner**.\* She received two top awards, being named the Outstanding Senior in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and the NCE Outstanding Senior.

Other seniors recognized this year were **Olakemi Akinlabi**, Otto H. York Department of Chemical, Biological and Pharmaceutical Engineering; **Michael Anderson**,\* Mechanical and Industrial Engineering;

**Tia Montalto**, Engineering Technology; **Mary Youssef**,\* Biomedical Engineering; and **Luz Angela Zidziunas**,\* Civil and Environmental Engineering.

The recipient of the Madame Mau Outstanding Female Engineering Student Award was **Lisha Malkani**,\* a biomedical engineering major enrolled in the accelerated BS/MS program. **Priya Radhi Santhanam '09**, a chemical engineering major, won the NCE Outstanding Graduate Student Award. Having completed her master's in chemical engineering, she is now a PhD candidate. ■

\*Dorman honors scholars

## A TRADITION CONTINUES

### 2012 ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

*Alumni Weekend in May once again brought graduates back to campus for activities and events that included the annual presentation of Achievement Awards by the NJIT Alumni Association. Six alumni were honored for singular accomplishments in fields spanning energy, biomedical technology, global infrastructure development and telecommunications, and for a deeply felt sense of service to NJIT and their communities.*

*The Alumni Association also honored Gail Clarke '44, who died in January, with a posthumous Meritorious Service Award. Clarke's many years of support for his alma mater included serving as president*

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Do you have news about your career, your family, an avocation? Share it in a class note for *NJIT Magazine*. And be sure to let us know if you have a new address.

**On the Web**, use the form at [www.njit.edu/alumni/classnotes](http://www.njit.edu/alumni/classnotes).

**By e-mail**, send news and photos with your graduation year(s) to [alumni-classnotes@njit.edu](mailto:alumni-classnotes@njit.edu).

**Via U.S. mail to:** Robert A. Boynton, Executive Director, Alumni Relations, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Eberhardt Hall NJIT Alumni Center, Room 218, 323 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Newark, NJ 07102-1982



Visiting the NJIT Campus Center, where Leon Baptiste and his company installed 160 solar panels in 2004.

*of the Alumni Association and with his wife, Dee, participating on the Leadership Circle Council of the NJIT Annual Fund. In 2004, the music of the carillon that the Clarkes donated to NJIT was first heard on campus, a gift presented with the intention of inspiring reflection on how a "creative combination of science and art can make life better."*

### LEON K. BAPTISTE '91 Ample Energy for Success

The success that Leon Baptiste has achieved since earning his degree in electrical engineering resonates with energy. It's the entrepreneurial energy he has invested in building LB Electric and the energy he helps to provide

through conventional and alternative electrical technologies.

Baptiste, who grew up in Newark, briefly attended Cheney University in Pennsylvania. Deciding that NJIT would be a better match, he transferred to both a new school and a promising career path. Baptiste gives substantial credit to NJIT's Educational Opportunity Program for setting him on that path, towards becoming an electrical engineer and launching his own business.

One of Baptiste's EOP advisors recommended an internship with Nordling Dean Electric Company that introduced him to the field and led to the part-time job he needed to continue his studies. Baptiste says guidance

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ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS, *continued*

provided by other faculty and staff mentors at NJIT, as well as his EOP counselors, was invaluable in charting the positive direction of his life. "Having someone to guide you when you are a student makes a huge difference. I'll never forget the help I received."

Full-time employment with Nordling Dean followed graduation, and Baptiste spent a total of 18 years with the company. But in 2000 Baptiste decided that he was ready to take a major entrepreneurial step and start his own company. Since then, he has achieved success across a broad spectrum of services offered through LB Electric and several subsidiaries.

Baptiste and his employees are expert in designing, installing and maintaining all types of electrical power systems, including solar and wind equipment. In 2004, he installed the 160 solar panels on the roof of the NJIT Campus Center that now help to meet the center's power needs.

Subsidiary LB Glass Enterprise specializes in glass curtain wall construction that can incorporate photovoltaic technology. Branching out in still another related area, LB Training provides instruction in the installation and maintenance of power systems, with particular emphasis on solar energy.

The range of business initiatives that Baptiste oversees as president and CEO of LB Electric has become increasingly diverse since he founded his company over a decade ago. He takes special satisfaction in

being at the forefront of making renewable energy technology part of our everyday power picture. He adds that it is equally satisfying to help ensure that power resources of every type are installed and utilized with the greatest possible degree of safety and efficiency.

Baptiste has also maintained a close connection with NJIT, one that reflects the importance he places on the mentoring that gave him direction as a student. He is a member of the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department's Advisory Board, and an industry advisor to the Interdisciplinary Design Studio (IDS) program in Albert Dorman Honors College. The multi-year IDS program allows students to take an innovative technological concept all the way to commercial development, and perhaps follow Baptiste on the path to entrepreneurial success.