‘Revolutionary’ in the lab

When the December 2004 issue of Scientific American named Joseph R. Ecker ’78 as its Research Leader of the Year for agriculture, we thought we’d seen the future. Ecker, who has come a long way since his days as a biology major under Steve Klug, Ray Fangerhoff, and Marlene Kayne, all still professors in TCNJ’s biology department. He could hardly be more enthusiastic about his experience with them for, as he says, having lab courses personally taught by one’s professor is “a lot more unusual in universities today than you might think.”

Joseph R. Ecker ’78

Joe went on to earn a doctorate in microbiology at Penn State, did post-doctoral work at Stanford, and returned in 1987 to teach genetics at the University of Pennsylvania. There he focused on unlocking the genomic secrets of Arabidopsis thaliana, a plant used the world over in genetic studies, eventually mapping the entire genome sequence. In 2000 he and many of his research team moved to the prestigious Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, CA, where they produced and indexed numerous mutations of the genes and developed a “gene chip” to study how the genes work. This “Arabidopsis Genome Initiative” has been a huge research project involving dozens of plant biologists worldwide, with major implications for understanding—at the level of individual molecules—how plants produce and ripen their fruits.

Largely as a result of Joe’s work, it is now possible for researchers to place an Internet order for Arabidopsis seeds containing genes with specific mutations needed to pursue other valuable discoveries. They can get delivery in two days of something that only five years ago required three years to produce.

While Joe Ecker has become an international leader in developmental biology (he’s now president of the International Society for Plant Molecular Biology), he is not the only member of his family to have an impressive career in science. He has two brothers and two sisters, all TCNJ graduates, and all but one of them have baccalaureate degrees.

His older brother, David ’76, earned a PhD in biochemistry and is now president of his Therapeutics, a subsidiary of his Pharmaceuticals of Carlsbad, CA, which makes equipment capable of rapidly identifying biological infectious agents. David lives with his wife, Donna, and two children in nearby Encinitas, not far from Joe and his wife, Gail, who live in Carlsbad with their three children.

A sister, Teresa (Ecker) Santanello ’82, became a radiologist. She lives in Hope township with her husband and three children, and practices at Radiology Affiliates Imaging in Hamilton.

A second sister, Anne Marie (Ecker) Takas ’83, went on to earn a pharmacy degree from the University of Tennessee and is now in charge of pharmacy at the CVS pharmacy in Lambertville, NJ. She lives in Titusville with her husband, David, and two children.

A second brother, Michael ’95, of Ewing, studied computer science in college and is the lead interactive systems designer for the Educational Testing Service in Lawrence Township.

A third brother, John ‘99, received an undergraduate degree in chemistry from the University of Miami and now works as an Internet order for Arabidopsis seeds containing genes with specific mutations needed to pursue other valuable discoveries. They can get delivery in two days of something that only five years ago required three years to produce.

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Robert LaCosta (AS) is a licensed dispenser of hearing aids in Albany, NY, doing business as The Hearing Aid Clinic with branches in seven upstate cities. He and his wife, Bettina, live in Albany with their two daughters, Angelique and Gia. In 2005 he self-published a novel, Like Father Like Son, that he describes as a sort of "folk gospel parable for today—an adult story for children and a children's story for adults." It is a story of the relationship between a father and his young son, a year-old boy that allegorizes the gospels. The book, which describes LaCosta as "an author, speaker, and singer/songwriter" is available through Amazon.com, and includes a CD of a song he has written entitled "The Water Song.

As vice president of Business Development at Boston-based Customer Analytics, he was responsible for winning the company's first vertical market clients. Recognized as an industry expert in consumer products, he is often cited in industry publications and is a sought-after thought leader within the field. He lives in New York City.

Natalie Gahrman (B) has spent the past few years speaking and practicing business ethics. After several years of teaching business courses and 10 years as a marketing and development manager, she turned to helping others bring order into their busy lives by being a professional coach. She learned the techniques from Coach University, an Internet training program based in Kansas. After graduating from that program, she earned certification with the International Coaching Federation, served on the board of the New Jersey Professional Coaches Association, and established her own firm, NRG Coaching Associates, all the while building up a base of clients.

In 2002 she self-published a how-to book based on her experience and titled Succeeding as a Super Busy Parent: 75 Practical Tips for Balancing Life, Love, Kids, and Career. It offers advice on how to avoid the inevitable stress of modern life and how to plan for success. She has been a guest on various radio talk shows, and made a keynote speech (she was the keynote at a recent Missouri State University graduation convocation) and writing short pieces for popular magazines.

Natalie and her husband, the director of Internet technology for a Manhattan brokerage, live with their two children, Matt, 10, and Kaitlyn, 8, in Hillburn.

Kevin Kasha (B) has been selected for the position of senior vice president, acquisitions and programming, at New Line Home Entertainment, a division of Time Warner that is a major independent film company and franchisor of home entertainment programs. This marks Kevin's return to the company after a six-year stint at Miramax, where he served as executive vice president. Now an industry veteran, he will be responsible for acquiring feature films and non-theatrical programs for distribution by New Line Home Entertainment. His prior experience involves six years at Sony Home Entertainment as senior vice president of sales and distribution.

Joseph C. Myers (AS) was recently honored by the Sayreville Alliance for Education (SAFE) with a billboard on Raritan Road, thanking him for his service on the Sayreville Board of Education and a part-time gym teacher for Our Lady of Victories Catholic School of Sayreville. He has been spending his free time with his wife, Kathleen, three children, and pet schnauzer.

Sami Daoud (EN) has been selected for the New Jersey Department of Transportation for 20 years and was promoted to bicycle and pedestrian program coordinator in 2002.

In 1990, he patented a novel water-based intumescent polymer that had wide application in fields as diverse as eye surgery and cosmetics. Among significant positions he held later were managing manufacturer at Universal Propulsion Co. of Phoenix, a maker of solid rocket propulsion systems, and senior engineer/project manager at Hercules Aerospace Corporation, maker of rocket propellants for a variety of weapons systems.

Three years ago he joined the Keller Companies in Manchester, NH, a supplier of nightlights and window shade to the construction industry. Keller also has a number of brokerage contracts for very light materials which provide highly effective thermal and acoustic insulation used in space vehicles and defense systems. Sam's skill in working with aerogel, a shielding material widely used in aerospace, biotech, and nuclear applications, is helping the company enter a number of promising markets.

But, Sam reveals, he also has a project going in his garage that he hopes he will be able to develop with an engineering company he is about to form. As the director of his work "over the next two years will focus on turning aerogel into a novel, environmentally friendly liquid fuel with only water and carbon dioxide as a combustion byproduct and used in high-performance engine exhaust exceeding that of benzene and hydrogen gas. Reduction of this technology to practice in commercial transportation requires a different innovation technology, which is already under consideration by his company.

If Sam's plan works out, he and his wife, Linda, an artist from Ringoes, will bring their 13-year-old daughter, Lucie, back to live in New Jersey in the next two or three years. He hopes to see Lucie attend TCNJ, and he'd like to use the talents of future TCNJ students in his company.

Nancy Kayman Stafford (B) recently was promoted to grant administrator/senior legal research analyst in the International Women's Human Rights Clinic at the Georgetown University Law Center. She lives in Alexandria, VA, and has been practicing human rights law for several years. She spent a year in Hong Kong with a human rights organization and now works with four African NGOs in Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, and Nigeria. She also has spent a few months working on women's rights issues in Acrobat, China.

Douglas V. Conover (B), of Princeton, has been promoted to regional executive in commercial banking at the Sovereign Bank of New Jersey. His new duties include overseeing the bank's community, commercial, and business activities in the area. Douglas has been in the banking industry for nearly 30 years and is a director of the Mercer County Chamber of Commerce Community. He resides in Hamilton Township, with his wife, Carol, and is head coach of a basketball girls' team.

Gary Gellman (AS) continues in his video business, Gellman Images, and recently received the Jersey Shore Public Relations and Advertising News (JSPRAN) Business Achievement Award.

Roxanne Harrington (JN) is employed at the Somerset County Technical Institute in Bridgewater and just received the Governor's Nursing Merit Award for Professional Advanced Practice for 2004. She resides in Wall Township with her husband, Victor, and their daughter, Gabrielle.

Patrick M. Ambrosio (B) has completed his ordination as a deacon for the Archdiocese of New York to serve as a worship leader in his congregation.

Linda Magelnicki Dougherty (B), of Princeton, has been named director of development and marketing for the National Horse Racing Hall of Fame Committee. Linda is married and has two daughters, ages 9 and 6.

Christine Hough (AS) lives in Hamilton and is the new business developer for Hiller Philadelphia, to which she has returned after a two-year hiatus as marketing manager for the Philadelphia architectural firm J.K. Rolle. Christine is active in the Society of Marketing Professional Services, the Urban Land Institute, and the Community Design Collaborative.
Mark Spiegel (B) received his master’s from New York University and is now the worldwide financial controller for Ethicon, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson that manufactures sutures and other medical products in Somerville. He is also a certified public accountant.

Harold Sutton (E), after working as a patrolman, detective, juvenile officer, crime prevention officer and other law-enforcement roles, has been promoted to borough police chief in Oceanport. He attended the Monmouth County Police Academy. He is a graduate of the West Point Command and Leadership program with certification as a public supervisor and eligible chief law enforcement executive. Sutton rose to the rank of captain in 1998 and as chief he is now the police department’s emergency management coordinator. He lives in Oceanport with his wife, Peggy, and their two children.

Andrew Arazmado (AS) recently joined Alfacell Corporation in Bloomfield as senior public accountant. Alfacell is a biopharmaceutical consulting firm. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants.

Bryan Parks (AS) is the new head coach of wrestling at Archbishop Wood High School in West Orange, N.J., after being the Knights’ assistant for seven years. A 1992 Wood graduate, he was a standout wrestler there, went on to wrestle at the College, and later returned to help coach at his old school. On coaching: “You should always teach them how to cut back. After you know you benefited as a wrestler. They seem to be responding.”

Ginger Hall (AS) has been promoted to manager of the tax department at the New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants.

Jeff Devito (AS) is a research biologist at SunOpta, a natural food and beverage company in Bridgewater, but his real passion is music. After learning how to play the guitar, Jeff played in several new Jersey jazz bands as well as rock bands during his time at the College. He then went on to earn a master’s degree in cell and development biology at the University of Pennsylvania. Jeff formed his band, the “Practice Zone,” which played as part of the New Jersey summer indie rock scene in North Jersey. The band focused on ‘60s garage rock and high-energy punk before introducing more melodic pop elements into its music on its promotional releases. [EP]. Then, the band has managed to win over fans and has created four well-received EPs. Its music ranges from ‘60s garage rock and high-energy punk before introducing more melodic pop elements into its music on its promotional releases. [EP]. Then, the band has managed to win over fans and has created four well-received EPs. Its music ranges from ‘60s garage rock and high-energy punk before introducing more melodic pop elements into its music on its promotional releases. [EP]. Then, the band has managed to win over fans and has created four well-received EPs. Its music ranges from ‘60s garage rock and high-energy punk before introducing more melodic pop elements into its music on its promotional releases. [EP]. Then, the band has managed to win over fans and has created four well-received EPs.

Jack Fitzpatrick (E) is the head coach of wrestling at Archbishop Wood High School in West Orange, N.J., after being the Knights’ assistant for seven years. A 1992 Wood graduate, he was a standout wrestler there, went on to wrestle at the College, and later returned to help coach at his old school. On coaching: “You should always teach them how to cut back. After you know you benefited as a wrestler. They seem to be responding.”

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New Arrivals

Daniel Bernan ’99 [AS] and wife, Josephine: a son, Matthew James, October 22, 2004. He joins his brother, Ben, 3.
Brendan D. Jacobs ’94 [AS] and wife, Tracy: a daughter, Noah, February 25, 2004. She joins her sister, Sierra.
Lara Scarzecamo Marino ’94 [N] and husband, Marc J. Marino ’95 [MEd]: a daughter, Ella Rose, September 20, 2004.
Catherine Damon ’94 [B] and husband, Michael: a daughter, double fraternal twins, Courtney Lynne and Elizabeth Anne, born August 22, 2004.
She joins her sister, Emily, 3.
John Breen ’96 [AS] and wife, Sharon: a daughter, Isabella Nicole, January 9, 2005.
Heather Hardy Vine ’96 [AS] and husband, William: a daughter, Morgan, April 21, 2004. She joins her sisters Alyson, 4 and Kylee, 3.
Carrie Bise Torchio ’99 [B] and husband, Jason Torchio ’96 [AS]: a son, Carson James, January 5, 2005.
Ericka Drake Harmston ’01 [E] and husband, Todd Harman ’00 [E]: a daughter, Jaylin

*4* Christopher Moyer graduated from the College as a cadet in the Army ROTC, and fought in Iraq where he earned a bronze star for valor. He is currently serving as a first lieutenant in the Army Rangers of the 82nd Airborne. He returned to Iraq last October and is now a member of the 101st Airborne. His seven siblings, mother, and father await his safe return home.
*5* Michael French (E) is known as the youngest club professional in New Jersey after recently qualifying for the position at Old York Country Club. French was his high school’s number one golfer and also earned a black belt in judo martial arts at the Kodo Kan Dojo. Now he is back in the states and looking forward to teaching high school students.
In Memorium
Margaret M. Hughes ’23
Jay O. Springer Sr.’24
Olga R. Wolfe ’25
Sarah W. Schilling ’28
Grace M. Steff ’28
Maion R. Thompson ’32
Catherine B. Mithell ’39
Beatrice I. Rogers ’39
Anne C. Brum ’47
Norma S. Kalier ’47
Bernice Eagle ’50
Joseph J. Spain ’53
Mary S. Krenzler ’54
Debbie J. Loper ’54
Mary R. Perpetua ’54
Emmiana A. Wohnder ’54
Arne Wulffquist ’55
Thomas Nelson ’55
Matthew S. Hyatt ’66
Helen T. Neidtun ’66
Frederick W. Pilster ’67
Deborah S. Frieder ’68
Richard L. Fisher ’70
May E. Tietjen ’71
Dorothy Vaughn Palmer ’72
Nancy A. Kent-Fraade ’72
William V. Pavlakos ’73
Tamea M. Jones ’73
Helen CMatur Riegel ’73
Helen C. Loper ’73
Bernice Eagle ’73
Michael J. Beach, FL, and working with high-risk mothers during his senior year at TCNJ.

Richard J. Mead ’47
Richard L. Fish ’70
Wayne C. Walston ’71
Edwin F. Podbielski ’71
Helen Coititt Rowland ’71
Gerald M. Apoldite ’71
May E. Tietjen ’71
William V. Parlaux ’71
Harry Smed ’71
Nancy A. Kent-Fraade ’71
Tamae M. Jones ’71
Dorothy Vaughn Palmer ’71
Alfred J. Dussa ’71
Donna M. Bourssa ’72
Steven J. Smith ’72
Mary A. Kluh ’72
Karen Pica Grenger ’73
James Stiles ’73
Bernice Eagle ’73

‘03
Steven J. Smith (CS) recently graduated from basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX. During the six weeks of training, Smith studied the air force mission, organization, and military customs and courtesies. He also performed drill and ceremony marches and received physical training, rifle marksmanship, field training exercises, and special training in human relations.

Keli Ryan Steuber (CS) is pursuing a master’s in communication studies at the University of Delaware. Her paper on “Behavioral Manifestations of Feelings of Mundane Romantic Relationship Management” was accepted for presentation at the annual conference of the National Communication Association held in Chicago last November.

While at TCNJ, he completed a computer internship at the Ewing Township Board of Education. James will work in the school system, making repairs, troubleshooting, setting up, and maintaining computers.

A graduate assistant in the Office of Enrollment Services at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, where she is pursuing a master’s in biology. A resident of Allamuchy Township, Megan recently received a $3,000 scholarship from the NJ Council of Trout Unlimited and she was a summer staff member at the Poquoson Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center in Warren County.

Beth Winkler (B) has been hired as a staff accountant at Witham-Smith-Brown, a CPA and consulting firm, having interned there for several months before graduating.

Jessica Woods (EN) spoke recently at a Women in Engineering class at High Point Regional High School in Wantage about her job as an engineer at the Picatinny Arsenal in Passaic County. She is one of the engineers developing new weapons designed to stop an incoming enemy missile. Currently, she is working on a project called "Broomstick", a plastic device that looks like a fuzzy Labrador retriever, but which may be filled with low-level pyrotechnics and used in military training missions to help our soldiers avoid being victims of roadside bombings.

Brian J. Glenn (B) published an article earlier this year in AgriSource Financial entitled “The Mechanics Behind Investment Funds: Why Closed-end Funds Provide Superior Returns.” His study examines the performance of both open- and closed-ended mutual funds as fixed income securities and vehicles for capital funds. It was based on research done during his senior year at TCNJ.

Johanna Goepel (N) is now living in Delray Beach, FL, and working with high-risk mothers for the Broward County Health Department.

Minal Patel (S) has been promoted to staff chemist in the medicinal chemistry department at Merck. In his new position, he will design and synthesize organic molecules for biological assay testing. He says that by doing this, her team hopes to make molecules that will be useful in treating various medical maladies.

Mark Edery (MEd) became vice principal of the Marlboro Memorial Middle School at the start of the 2004–2005 academic year. He taught social studies and served as an administrative intern for six years at Southern Regional High School in Manahawkin. Mark also has directed a middle school summer program at the Salem County Vocational Technical School.

April Lowe (MEd) has been appointed as Tiron Community Charter School’s lower-school director for kindergarten through fifth grade. She is the school’s former assistant director for curriculum and instruction. She joined TCDS in the fall of 2003, after teaching first grade at Parkway Elementary school in Ewing for four years, and won the Millken National Educator Award, a national honor that recognizes educators with a $25,000 prize.

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Megan Morgan (S) is a graduate assistant in the Office of Enrollment Services at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, where she is pursuing a master’s in biology. A resident of Allamuchy Township, Megan recently received a $3,000 scholarship from the NJ Council of Trout Unlimited and she was a summer staff member at the Poquoson Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center in Warren County.

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