

Celano, Clare Marie. "For many, a mid-life career change is the answer". Greater Media Newspapers. URL: [http://mow.guide.gmnews.com/current/schools\\_feature](http://mow.guide.gmnews.com/current/schools_feature). Accessed 6/1/2010.

## For many, a mid-life career change is the answer

By Clare Marie Celano



**Figure 1: Kaosiso Reyes and Alise Pipitone are students in the nursing program at Brookdale Community College. BY JEFF GRANIT**

Some folks know their life's path early on and many stay in that place for a lifetime. For others, however, life and circumstance, or merely a change of heart, will present an opportunity to explore something different, something that in many cases turns out to be a very good thing.

Area colleges are helping those seeking a new career direction, offering knowledge and guidance, many times during mid-life, helping lead them to a career that seems a perfect fit.

Alise Pipitone has finally realized her dream career. Pipitone, 40, of Middletown, spent years working at an electrical contracting company. She even eventually opened her own electrical contracting business with a partner in 2003.

Although she loved the electrical business, Pipitone's childhood dream was to become a doctor and that was always in the back of her mind. She started taking online college courses and returned to her dream of one day working in the field of medicine.



**Figure 2: Marianne Feeney and Tom Felcetto took the environmental public health course offered through Rutgers University's Office of Continuing Education.**

Although Pipitone had to wait 18 months to get into the nursing program at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, the wait was well worth it.

"I absolutely love the nursing program," Pipitone said. "It's a perfect fit for me." Pipitone hopes to work in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit after she graduates. "I knew in my heart the very first day I worked on this unit that this was where I wanted to be," Pipitone said.

Managing her family, her education, and her work requires a lot of juggling. Fortunately, her family is very supportive.

"It's worth it in the end," Pipitone said. "I finally found out where I want to be." Becoming a nurse is also the career choice for Kaosiso Reyes, 38, of Toms River, who previously worked as a police officer in her native Nigeria.

At one point during her 14-year police career, Reyes worked for the United Nations. Her job took her to Kosovo, Senegal, and Liberia, where she met her husband. He worked as a diplomatic security officer for the United Nations.

They married and came to America in 2005 and now have two children, a 2-year-old and a 10-month old. Reyes decided to make the career switch due to an event that she witnessed in Liberia.

"The United Nations medical team was in the middle of a 14-year-war. There was no water, no electricity and a hospital with no equipment. The team became a traveling emergency room, providing needed medical care for the injured or ill," she explained. "They never turned anyone away. I was inspired by their actions. I knew then that I wanted to go into medicine," she said. "It was really hard to leave my job and the first

year here was really tough. I decided to go back to school and do what the team in Liberia had inspired me to do – care for the sick and injured.”

Her goal is to work as a nurse practitioner in the emergency room. “I want to be in the field; hands on – that’s my kind of nursing,” Reyes said. Some people move into a second career because they have lost their longtime career positions.

Tom Felcetto, 63, Edison, is a registered environmental health specialist (REHS). A 12-week intensive training program helped him to achieve this.

Felcetto lost his job as a pharmaceutical researcher for Merck & Co. Inc., in 2005. He had many years of experience, yet still could not find a job.

“[A friend led me to the environmental public health course \(EPH\) run by Rutgers University’s Office of Continuing Public Education,](#)” Felcetto revealed. “Going back to school was what he advised me to do. The program was very intense, but would allow me to draw on my previous work experience, as well as my previous education. It made me employable.”

Felcetto’s responsibility at the Middlesex County Health Department is to inspect food safety in supermarkets, restaurants and convenience stores. He also inspects public pools, and deals with water issues.

“I am enjoying this as much as my first career,” he said. “My job is to protect the public health in my area. The program worked very well for me and I would recommend it to others. Life experience was on my side this time.”

Marianne Feeney, like Felcetto, also works as an REHS, for the Somerset County Health Department where she inspects restaurants, day care centers, convenience stores and tattoo parlors.

Feeney previously worked for years as a dental hygienist. She remembered being interested in the environmental health course at Rutgers University after graduating from Montclair State College. A move to Virginia for her husband’s job postponed that course for 12 years. When they moved back to New Jersey, she signed up for the 12-week course, a decision she said has made her “very happy.”

She graduated in 2007 and now works full time for Somerset County Health Department. Feeney said the job is working out great for her. “I don’t sit around at all day at a desk. I am out in my vehicle visiting sites. I am also teaching people about food safety,” she said. Feeney is able to work in diverse situations and there is always something new to do.

# RUTGERS

New Jersey Agricultural  
Experiment Station

“I love to learn and this job allows me to continue to grow. It’s not limiting at all. You can go from bed bugs to polluted waters to food safety and complaints about neighbors. I love the diversity.”

**For more information about the Rutgers EPH Program:**

**Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey**

New Brunswick

848-932-7315

[www.rutgers.edu/eph](http://www.rutgers.edu/eph)