

NJ State Assemblyman Tim Eustace, Ramapo College of New Jersey, Class of 1978

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The life story of New Jersey Assemblyman Tim Eustace features as much drama as the 2018 Academy Award nominated movies. Assemblyman Eustace (D-38), however, has no interest in winning an Oscar with his story. His only goal is to share his past for the purpose of helping others in the future, and making the world a “more compassionate place to live,” he said.

Ramapo College has had a leading role in his story, according to Asm. Eustace, a 1978 graduate of Ramapo College of New Jersey. “I win every time I have improved someone’s life,” said the assemblyman in a NJASCU interview early in 2018. Improving the lives of others has been his focus, no matter what role he has played: that of father, spouse, chiropractor, elected official (local and state offices), and philanthropist.

Ramapo President Peter Mercer summarized the Eustace story when he introduced him at Ramapo’s May 17, 2013 graduation ceremony at which Asm. Eustace was the keynote speaker.

“Assemblyman Timothy Eustace is a proud alumnus of Ramapo College. He earned his B.S. in Psychology from Ramapo and went on to complete his Doctor of Chiropractic degree at the Pennsylvania College of Chiropractic. Assemblyman Eustace’s public service career has included terms as a councilman, mayor, and now as a member of the state legislature. As a private person and as a public servant, he has pushed the boundaries of social issues, civic rights, education and health care. As one of only two openly gay legislators, Assemblyman Eustace was the first to be elected to the state legislature as an out candidate. His commitment to the public good extends beyond the State of New Jersey. He is also an active member of Rotary International. He and his partner Kevin have spearheaded health and education efforts in Kenya and they adopted three children during the height of the AIDS crisis. In 1991 one of their sons succumbed to the disease,” said Dr. Mercer.

Asm. Eustace updated the commencement introduction with the fact that his “beloved” and lifelong partner Kevin Williams died in 2015. His other two children, now 24 and 29 years old, are “doing really well,” happy news in a life distinguished by dramatic highs and lows.

His mother – “a beautiful spirt,” plagued by alcoholism, lost her life after an alcohol-fueled accident when Tim was a teenager. “That left me, my dad and my six siblings without the woman we loved. And it broke all of our hearts,” said Asm. Eustace.

“I drank to excess, smoked, and did drugs to quiet the cries of pain I spent years stealing food and diapers for our family and never got caught by the law. But I did get caught stealing a car for joyriding. I ended up in the juvenile justice system, with no hope of ever going anywhere in my life

“But someone was listening to my loud call for help. And he worked at A Better Chance, a scholarship organization. For some reason, he believed in me more than I (believed in myself) and arranged for me to have a full scholarship to Blair Academy

“That whole miracle repeated itself, when someone from the Tyrell Scholarship Fund gave me the same opportunity at Ramapo College, where many professors took the time to understand what I needed to succeed. After those school years, I was beginning to believe in myself as my life turned around. All because these people listened to me”

With an undergraduate degree in psychology, Asm. Eustace came away from Ramapo with far more than academic credentials. Ramapo was small and intimate enough to be his supportive “family,” yet it was “innovative,” “flexible,” and “academically exciting and challenging.” It instilled in him the value of listening to, caring for, and believing in others – a lesson he has carried with him throughout his life. In the commencement address he delivered to the students, compassion was the unequivocal message.

Elected to the assembly in 2012, Asm. Eustace now serves as deputy conference leader, vice-chair of the Health and Senior Services Committee, a member of the Law and Public Safety Committee, as well as a member of the new Assembly Science and Innovation and Technology Committee. With a successful chiropractic practice in Maywood, NJ, Asm. Eustace acknowledges that he is “busy” – an understatement. But the intensity of his schedule is the result of putting his heart and soul into every issue, project, and person he cares about – and that includes his constituents, patients, family members, legislative colleagues, friends, and alma mater. He serves on Ramapo College Alumni Science Advisory Board.

Following a trip to Africa, Tim Eustace and Kevin Williams established a charity and raised \$341,000 to build one school and begin building a second. Each year the family returns to work on the school. In typical Eustace fashion, he listened and learned from his experience.

“There is an old saying in Africa,” he said. “If you want to go somewhere fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, take everyone with you. When all of you graduates go out there into the world, for the rest of your life, go far.”

