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Vision of 'Ohana

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“...I like that slight informality, where people are excited—more like a sporting event than people sitting on their hands.”

“No one gets left behind.”

“Four-year-olds are the smartest people on the planet.”
Welcome to the new Legacies – a redesigned space for sharing stories of COCC, COCC students and the COCC Foundation. I am excited by this new direction – moving from a newsletter format to a magazine – and hope you enjoy the content and the updated presentation.

With the support and encouragement of the COCC Foundation Board of Trustees, our Foundation staff worked with those in our College Relations department to conceive and then produce this new publication. With it comes expanded articles highlighting the people and activities that make the College and Foundation so valuable to our community.

You will enjoy reading about our students and Foundation scholarship recipients. Those students and their stories are the lifeblood of COCC and the Foundation. They are the also the reason many of you have chosen to give so generously in support of student scholarships. Their stories are inspiring – and possible – because of your patronage.

Additionally, in this issue of Legacies you will read about the Central Oregon Symphony and the great relationship between COCC and that outstanding performance group, now celebrating its 50th anniversary. We also have information about two projects, supported by grants to the Foundation, which are important to our region.

I want to thank the Foundation staff, especially Zak Boone and Brittny Nichols, for their leadership on this project. Also, a special thanks to Lora Szaraniec, graphic designer in the College Relations department, who transformed Legacies into this new format.

As part of this new direction, we worked with local writers to explore issues in depth and provide you with a comprehensive look at the topics we felt were important.

NEW BEGINNINGS AND CAMPUS CELEBRATIONS

This time of year always feels like a new beginning on our campuses. In late September, we welcomed back thousands of students working toward degrees and certificates, and opened our doors to even more who are taking the first step toward their educational, career and personal goals. We look forward to sharing stories from these students in future editions of Legacies.

This fall we commemorate anniversaries in Madras and Prineville where we have been operating campuses now for five years. We celebrate these milestones with the students who have been able to more easily access courses and offerings, and with the communities which support the College and our students.

Dr. Shirley I. Metcalf
COC Foundation President
We Are ‘Ohana

Dr. Shirley Metcalf’s Approach to Leadership and Life

by Angela Reid

I
don’t take us more than five minutes to find common ground. We have never met before, but as we talk in her office in the Boyle Education Center, COCC president Dr. Shirley Metcalf and I realize we share many connections—mutual friends, cities we’ve called home, books we’re reading.

This is her gift, really, or as she calls it, her “superpower.” “I love to talk to them, and learn about them, and find connections. When I was young, my mother was always telling me to not talk to strangers.” But to me, ‘ohana is her gift, really, or as she calls it, her “superpower.”

‘Ohana is the Hawaiian word for family, but its interpretation is more a lesson in culture than in language. In Hawaii, where Dr. Metcalf was born and raised, and where she served in multiple leadership positions for Hawaii Community College, your ‘ohana is your extended family—your friends and colleagues and their families as well. No man is an island, and in Hawaii, the island is why.

“Well, when you live in a small, isolated place,” Dr. Metcalf explains, “everyone is connected.” In this way, she says, Hawaii is a lot like Central Oregon. We all cross paths eventually, and often in several different ways—at the board meeting, and then the school play, and then out on the trails. It may be only when she’s on the mountain that Dr. Metcalf experiences any anonymity, hidden beneath her ski helmet and goggles.

Head of the Family

In this great, tangled ‘ohana, we are all related. In fact, if you’ve ever tried to explain how you’re related to the half-brother of your daughter-in-law’s stepmother, you might find some relief in the Hawaiian term, “calabash cousin.” A calabash is a large serving bowl, made of wood or a hollow gourd, around which family and friends gather for a shared meal. According to this definition, if you are close enough to share a meal, you are family. “Many of my friends’ children will call me Auntie Shirley,” she adds, matter-of-factly.

‘Ohana Is Your Extended Family—Your Friends and Colleagues and Their Families as Well.

Zak Boone echoes, when asked how he views the new president’s role in the college ‘ohana. “Dr. Metcalf is the favorite aunt,” says the executive director of the COCC Foundation. “The one who always remembers everyone’s names and the names of their children and grandchildren, the one who shows up for all the important events, the one you stay in touch with the rest of your life.”

Boone believes that ‘ohana is more than a philosophy for Dr. Metcalf. “She truly embodies it.”

How does Dr. Metcalf see her role in the COCC family? “I’m the head,” she says, without hesitation, and it’s not a boast, but rather an acknowledgment of accountability. “I own every decision—good or bad.” In Hawaii, she explains, the community colleges are all part of one large, hierarchical system, and each college chancellor must answer to the management team and board of regents for the system. “But here, there is no one to blame but me.” By her own admission, this has taken some getting used to. She is, after all, a people person—someone who, like so many of us, likes to be liked. She reminds herself of her responsibility to the greater good with a scrap of paper she keeps in her desk that says, “If you’re not being criticized, you may not be doing much.”

Indeed, there is much she is doing. Before she was named permanent president in March 2015, Dr. Metcalf served as interim president, dean of extended learning and interim vice president for instruction. In those roles, she cultivated her passions around outreach, diversity and development—a potent combination.

While overseeing the college’s extended learning programs, Dr. Metcalf also served on the board of the Partnership to End Poverty, led at the time by Scott Cooper. Together, they mused on an idea that would offer prison inmates the chance to channel their business savvy in a more productive (and legal) direction. Dr. Metcalf immediately saw the opportunities at hand, with both the Deer Ridge Correctional Institution and the Small Business Development Center in her purview. With creative problem solving and persuasive fundraising, she was able to get an eight-week job skills program up and running quickly.

“I’m very proud of that program,” she says. And it’s easy to see why. At the graduation “ceremony” for the program, students go before a panel of local entrepreneurs to pitch their business ideas and ask for backing, much like the popular TV series, Shark Tank. “And if you close your eyes,” says Dr. Metcalf, “You would never know you were in a prison.”

In her extended family, there are no black sheep.
Dr. Metcalf’s talents for fundraising are fueled by an enthusiasm for educational opportunity that’s both infectious and relentless. “Shirley doesn’t know ‘no,’” she says, quoting those who have sat with her at a negotiating table. At this, she pauses to point to a collection of painted wooden dolls atop her office bookcase. They are called daruma, she explains, which is Japanese for persistence. Several of her daruma are missing one eye. She explains that each daruma represents a different goal, and only when the goal is reached can she finally paint that missing eye. Her goals are literally staring her in the face. But the daruma are weighted in the bottom, so that if they are knocked over, they will stand right back up. “Seven times down, eight times up,” she says, quoting a Japanese proverb. “Those downtimes for us are actually really useful to us, because we can be more thoughtful about what we’re doing,” she says, “instead of just reacting.”

She also hopes the Oregon Promise will help stabilize enrollment. Under this new program, funded by the State of Oregon which combines funding from both federal and state sources, high school graduates may be eligible to attend community college for just $50 per term, plus tuition. Unlike a four-year university, the COCC mission emphasizes access, affordability and community enrichment. “We wouldn’t be here without the students we serve,” says Zak Boone of Dr. Metcalf’s philosophy. “She likes to say that we are the ‘community’s college.’” Or in the words of Lilo and Stitch, the Disney characters arguably responsible for introducing ‘ohana to the mainland, “No one gets left behind.”

Dr. Ann Wetherell, assistant professor of art history, Willamette University, discusses the social and political context of Japanese woodblock prints. She also hopes the Oregon Promise will help stabilize enrollment. Under this new program, funded by the State of Oregon which combines funding from both federal and state sources, high school graduates may be eligible to attend community college for just $50 per term, plus tuition. Unlike a four-year university, the COCC mission emphasizes access, affordability and community enrichment. “We wouldn’t be here without the students we serve,” says Zak Boone of Dr. Metcalf’s philosophy. “She likes to say that we are the ‘community’s college.’” Or in the words of Lilo and Stitch, the Disney characters arguably responsible for introducing ‘ohana to the mainland, “No one gets left behind.”

Dr. Metcalf sees community college as a way to not just democratize education, but also to stabilize the regional economy. Enrollment has historically peaked during economic booms, and dropped during economic busts. Does it concern her that there is an inverse relationship between the prosperity of the community and the prosperity of the college? “Those downtimes for us are actually really useful to us, because we can be more thoughtful about what we’re doing,” she says, “instead of just reacting.”

Because Oregon is only the second state in the country to offer this kind of aid (Tennessee was the first), much remains to be seen. But according to Ron Paradis, executive director of college relations, COCC anticipates an increase in new-student enrollment of 10 to 15 percent in its first year.

So while the new OSU-Cascades campus in Bend will attract an influx of four-year university students, COCC continues to play a vital role in the communities it serves – which include Redmond, Prineville and Madras, and not just Bend. Currently, about 25% of Central Oregon high school seniors enroll at COCC within a year, either as a more affordable runway to the four-year university system, or as an alternate path altogether. Unlike a four-year university, the COCC mission emphasizes access, affordability and community enrichment. “We wouldn’t be here without the students we serve,” says Zak Boone of Dr. Metcalf’s philosophy. “She likes to say that we are the ‘community’s college.’”

Angela Deid is a freelance writer living in Bend.
When Professor Amy Howell interviewed for a position as Program Director of Early Childhood Education (ECE) at Central Oregon Community College in 2004, she arrived equipped with the tools of her trade: a commitment to the profession of teaching, a passion for learning at all ages and bins of noisy toys. “It was probably the strangest – and loudest – interview they’ve ever had,” she says with a laugh. Her blue eyes glint with mischief at the memory of brilliant academics playing with blocks and toy telephones. Seated across from her at a local café, I can already tell from Amy’s candid manner and quick smile that she lives out what she teaches: whether you’re a four-year-old child or a seasoned professor, learning begins with play.

Soon after her interview, Amy accepted a temporary contract as the first full-time coordinator of the burgeoning ECE program, a position that evolved into her permanent role. Her family (her husband and infant daughter) moved from Nashville for the job – a homecoming for Howell, who grew up in Bend with her mother. She fell in love with the position, and hasn’t looked back.

Professionally, Howell is in demand for her rampant love of children’s literature. “It would be great if books were edible because that’s where all my money goes anyway!” she jokes, tossing her strawberry blonde hair over her shoulder as we settle in with our lattes.

It seems all the hubbub would erode enthusiasm, but I can see that’s not true in Amy’s case. So what keeps her going? Amy pauses, pressing her lips together as she considers this question. “I think my real passion is helping adults, in particular, see through the eyes of a child,” she says after a moment. “That way they can see best practices from the inside out.”

Amy enjoys nabbing time with her children (her husband and son continue amazing her. “All year I’m focused on helping other people, but in summer I get this gift of time with my kids,” says Amy. “Experiencing life with them just fills me up.” And some of her most profound learning moments have been on family trips when she glimpses the world anew through their eyes.

One day last summer while visiting friends in Italy, Amy’s daughter was in charge of the camera as they toured museums and art galleries. At the end of the day Amy perused the pictures, curious about which paintings her daughter enjoyed. “They were all pictures of animals,” says Amy, smiling. “She’d zoomed in on the tiny ladybug or the cat in the background and I had no idea which paintings they came from.” Rather than being upset, Amy perceived this as an illustration of the difference between the wondrous world of childhood and the “proper” world of adulthood. Another time, her children played a spontaneous game of soccer with local Italian children – neither group knowing the others’ language. “Watching my kids playing, I realized the world doesn’t have to be so scary,” says Amy. “It was profound.

Their ideas aren’t silly – they are as valid as anyone else’s.”

Amy’s favorite quote is Socrates’ “Wisdom begins in wonder.”

Walking through campus, you might see Howell’s students outside with handmade instruments discussing the connection between music and science development, or reading children’s literature and examining its link to adult literacy. Once, she planned a first-day ice breaker that included bouncy balls and Star Wars music playing so loud it caught the attention of the professor next door – Amy still laughs over his confused expression. Of all her duties, though, advising appointments are her favorite. “Because of COCC’s diverse student body, conversations sometimes include multiple children, jobs, second jobs and strategizing about how all that comes together,” she tells me, leaning forward and cupping her mug in her hands as if she were holding a bowl of candy. “I love those conversations.”

Amy’s favorite quote is Socrates’ “Wisdom begins in wonder.”

Changing the System with Dr. Amy Howell

by Emily Woodworth
As adults we have so many rules, but it doesn’t need to be so complicated.

Unfortunately, in the adult world changing the rules – even the illogical ones – is never simple. One issue Amy has addressed professionally is the problem of access for her students. “I have students with deep commitments to early learning, but sometimes because of where they were born – places like Madras or Warm Springs – their ability to access resources is limited,” she says with a shake of her head that communicates wordlessly the deep roots of the problem. But she soon follows that gesture with a firm nod and look of resolve in her eyes. “I want to find ways to help that.”

For years now Amy has worked with the COCC Foundation to ensure that scholarships are allocated to deserving students, from the abused mother of two living in a women’s shelter, to the woman who nursed her daughter through leukemia only to lose her husband (yet still fulfilled her lifelong dream of going to college). “Students trust other students,” Amy explains. “They might give up if they didn’t have someone to trust other students,” Amy explains. “They might give up if they didn’t have this cheerleader with firsthand experience saying, ‘You can do this’ – let’s grab coffee and talk.”

Thanks to the project’s marvelous success, it was recently awarded a Ford Family Foundation Grant to continue.

At a banquet honoring academically outstanding students last year, Amy gave a speech that sheds light on her dedication to going the extra mile, summed up by the phrase, “There is great value in a broken crayon.” She explained that the moment after a crayon breaks is vital for children because they face a question: What will they do with brokenness? Repair it? Switch colors? Decide they have two crayons? Or will they avoid the problem, feeling defeated or angry? Each day, she says adults face the same question – when we’re presented with a broken situation, how will we react? Will we embrace anger or ignorance, becoming fixated on the brokenness of the crayon, instead of its potential?

That’s not the path Amy has chosen. Instead she lives her life as one huge opportunity to learn, and as we’ve learned, the possibilities instead of impossibilities; to live and teach in a space of wonder, accepting that there may not be an easy answer (or any answer at all), but continuing regardless, to recognize the potential for play, humor, and childlike creativity to heal grown-up problems; and to uncover the value in everything – even in the situations that seem damaged beyond repair. Amy has learned to see the value of broken crayons.

As adults we have so many rules, but it doesn’t need to be so complicated.

Emily Woodworth is a freelance writer living in Sisters.

“...to uncover the value in everything – even in the situations that seem damaged beyond repair. Amy has learned to see the value of broken crayons.

SOLAR LIGHTS UP REDMOND CAMPUS

by Mary Ann Asson-Batres

In late October of this year, COCC’s Redmond campus is slated to be powered by a new photovoltaic system array. Sunlight Solar Energy of Bend has assigned IGS Solar of Ohio to design, install and maintain a 50kW solar array that will be located on 50,000 square feet of vacant land on the Redmond campus, across from Robert’s Field at the Redmond Airport on Airport Way. The array will be composed of nine rows of solar panel modules attached to a metal racking system, with an overall size that will be twice that of the installation at Central Electric Co-op in Bend.

The project exemplifies COCC’s commitment to renewable energy generation technologies, innovation and community partnerships. The installation will do more than provide energy; however, it will also support the advanced energy systems and manufacturing programs that are in place at the Redmond campus. Science faculty, such as Dr. Bruce Emerson, are already incorporating technical training in the physics and mechanics of solar power in their lesson plans. Having the new system online will allow students to collect information in real time for analysis and predictive modeling exercises. Tours for K-12 students and the public will be conducted once the facility is up and running.

COCC has signed a 20-year agreement with IGS Solar to finance 70% of the $2 million dollar project. When the system is up and running, IGS Solar will be able to sell power back to COCC at a discounted rate because of the federal and state tax incentives that are available for servicing tax-exempt entities. In real terms, this means that solar-generated electricity will be sold back to COCC at 50% of Pacific Power’s usual electricity rates. It is estimated that the solar array will provide 90% of the Redmond campus’ energy needs, which will reduce College operating costs, a benefit that translates into keeping tuition costs down for students. Thirty percent of the project cost will come from grants awarded to COCC by Pacific Power ($320,000) and the Energy Trust of Oregon ($200,000). This infusion of money is a second substantial benefit since it significantly reduces COCC’s remaining financial obligation to IGS Solar and puts the College in a good position to take advantage of an agreed upon option to purchase the system after seven years of operation. The system is estimated to have a longevity of 35-40 years (possibly more since there is no data to show how long the system will be operational).

Obtaining the extramural funds from Pacific Power and Energy Trust of Oregon makes this early buy-back financially possible. Owning the system outright will mean that COCC will save most of the costs for electrical power at the Redmond campus, while also being able to generate revenue from selling unused solar-generated electricity back to Pacific Power. Leveraging the grant money with the negotiated agreement with IGS Solar is an excellent example of how external grants are enhancing COCC’s revenue streams and benefiting students by keeping tuition rates down.
Conductor Michael Gesme’s arms are aloft, baton in hand, leading the Central Oregon Symphony in a excerpt of Hayden’s symphony no. 104 in D major. The tails of his black tuxedo jacket swish as he suddenly turns to the audience, saying, “It starts out raucous and gets louder, and then there’s this ‘Shh! Shh!’ over here.” He gestures toward the strings. “... It’s always the violins, right?”

The audience chuckles and Gesme continues: “Then it’s stone quiet, like the computer stopped working. And Hayden continues: “Then it’s stone quiet, like the computer stopped working. And Hayden

Harmonic Convergence

Gesme begins the symphony with a tease and gives a Bronx cheer.

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The audience chuckles and Gesme continues: “Then it’s stone quiet, like the computer stopped working. And Hayden does that, stops the world for two whole measures to clear the world, and then they all come back in and go ...” And he gives a Bronx cheer.

Laughter arises from the listeners, and Gesme begins the symphony with a tease to the audience: “See if you hear what I mean.”

Gesme’s philosophy is that classical music newcomers just need that hook. “If they have one thing to listen for, they’re in and committed to the piece,” he said. “I like that slight informality, where people are excited—more like a sporting event than people sitting on their hands.”

This is classic Gesme, the consummate educator, exercising a natural talent for making symphonic music fun and accessible. It’s also symbolic of the mission of two joint forces. Fifty years ago, COCC created the symphony, which continues today as part of the music curriculum. Gesme, the College’s professor of music, leads the players, who audition to enroll in the symphony as a class. Since 1994, the nonprofit Central Oregon Symphony Association has been raising funds which allow the orchestra to be a full-fledged community performance group beyond the COCC campus. That includes covering tuition for the symphony’s eighty-five members, hiring guest artists, promoting the concerts and other responsibilities, down to distributing tickets and ushering.

The symphony makes public appearances throughout the year in venues such as the Redmond Airport, Prineville Library and Madras High School, and visits local elementary schools, too. The COCC-COSA partnership drives the symphony’s synergy between the College and the community. “Neither entity would be able to maintain the Central Oregon Symphony’s current programming level on their own,” said COSA board member Joan Hinds, speaking on behalf of the COSA Board. “Simply stated, it is the partnership that makes the symphony possible.”

Together, they invite the community to join in celebrating this half-century-old cultural endeavor with concerts and special events this year, in addition to its regular spring, fall and winter performance program.

“The three main concerts will be a testament to the symphony’s past and a prelude to its future,” said Gesme. They will feature favorite guest artists from the past two decades and a world premiere this May of a commemorative composition, “Cascades,” commissioned from prolific, award-winning conductor and composer James Barnes, professor emeritus at the University of Kansas School of Music in Lawrence.

Indeed, there is much to celebrate. COSA’s well-cultivated donor base allows the symphony to offer reasonably priced and even free admission to concerts. The performances draw more than 8,000 people annually, often filling all 1,400 seats at the Bend Senior High School auditorium, which is significant for a region more than 150 miles from a major metropolitan area.

“In the last 50 years, we have raised the bar for music appreciation with this long-standing, high-functioning symphony, and with its tie to the College, it’s a win-win for the region,” said Zak Boone, executive director of the COCC Foundation. “The symphony is a great example of where instruction and the community meet.”

Every musician in the symphony is technically a student at COCC, but not what people may think of in the traditional sense. Drawing from nearly every demographic, the orchestra is composed of high school and college students who play alongside financial planners, helicopter pilots, hairdressers, teachers, professors and retirees. “It is a true reflection of the community that we serve,” said Gesme, who is also chair of COCC’s Fine Arts and Communication department. “For many of the younger members of the orchestra, it’s their first chance to play a symphonic repertoire in a large ensemble setting, and that is hugely important in their development as musicians.”

Cellist Amy Mitchell has played with the symphony since 2002, shortly after she moved to Bend.

“Playing the cello brings me joy, and I treasure the relationships I have with my fellow musicians,” said Mitchell, who teaches high school math and science. “There is no other friendship quite like that of people who create music together.”

She recalled how, on the night of her first rehearsal with the symphony, she was amazed to discover that all of the musicians eat dinner together. “I was immediately invited to join a table of friendly strangers and made to feel like one of the bunch,” she said. “Although I have played in several community orchestras, I have never experienced the camaraderie shared by this amazing group of musicians and by our wonderful leader, Michael Gesme.”

GROWTH AND GESME

The region’s population growth in the last two decades is what Gesme cites as the reason that attendance at symphony concerts has quadrupled and the

Harmonic Convergence

COC ...
Gesme, who plays piano, trumpet and sings, knew at age 10 that he wanted to conduct choral music. As a freshman at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, he founded an ensemble, which became the Luther College Chamber Orchestra. The well-respected orchestra continues attracting top musicians today. Gesme, who also holds a master’s of music in orchestral conducting from the University of Missouri-Columbia, previously served as music director of the Missouri Chamber Orchestra and Linfield Chamber Orchestra. The College and COSA regard him as a cultural treasure, acknowledging that he could easily be leading an orchestra in a major city.

College officials and COSA Board members cite that after every performance, they overheat audience members saying “Wow!” and people new to the area remark on the caliber of the concerts.

The region grows, the cultural dimension of Central Oregon will continue to add to the area’s reputation for its high quality of life, and draw more people as well as more entertainment options. Ensuring that the symphony will thrive and remain an integral part of the community will not be easy, Gesme said.

Yet, he continues to hope.

“My dream, a true pipe dream, is to see the building of a large performing arts space, something that seats 1,200 to 1,500, a true home for the symphony and other community ensembles,” he said.

Yet, he does long for one: “Someday, when the time is right, I would love to do the Verdi Requiem.”

Cathy Carroll is a freelance writer living in Bend.

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**STUDENT SUCCESS**

“I learned from incredible professors who really cared about my education and my overall success.” - ERIN ZURFLU

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**ERIN ZURFLU**

Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer Degree & Certificate of Completion, Practical Nursing

“Once admitted to medical school, I realized my educational path was very unique. Many of my classmates came from Ivy League schools and their stories of crowded classes, horribly competitive classmates and astronomical debt left me speechless. They spoke of office hours and classes led by teaching assistants with little access to their actual professors, and difficulty getting good letters of recommendation as they had no real face time with their science faculty.

“I contrasted this with my experience at COCC where I learned from incredible professors who really cared about my education and my overall success. I thought of several of my professors from COCC whom I still consider important mentors and good friends, and I thanked my lucky stars that I stayed in Bend where I had so many opportunities to find my way with the support of so many incredible people.”

CURRENTLY

ERIN ZURFLU, M.D., ANESTHESIOLOGIST

RENO TAHOE ANESTHESIOLOGY GROUP

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**SYMPHONIC MUSIC FOR THE PEOPLE**

A guiding principle behind it all is making classical music available to the people of Central Oregon. One way the symphony brings the music community together with the local love of sports is the “Beat Beethoven’s 5th” annual 5K race in August, which was launched last year. Runners begin at COCC, wearing T-shirts with a tuxedo design and attempt to finish before the end of the thirty-three-minute Beethoven’s 5th Symphony, broadcast over loudspeakers. Finishers receive ribbons which say “I Beat Beethoven” or “Beethoven Beat Me.” With a costume contest, prizes, a kids’ race, live music (after Beethoven’s 5th), food, drinks, a raffle, an appearance by Beethoven and a symphony ticket for each runner, it introduces the local community to many of great works by relatively unknown composers and relatively new works, too.

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**MUSICIANS’ APPRECIATION DINNER**

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**Tickets at cosysymphony.com or call 541.377.9341**

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Jen Lester always wanted to work in the health care field, but as a single mother of three, she thought returning to school was impossible. “I figured I was too old, not smart enough and didn’t have enough time,” she remembers. “But one day I realized that I had to try, even though I had no idea how I was going to make it work.”

Despite working three jobs simultaneously, an hour commute to campus each way and raising her family, she set out to accomplish her goal. It was a COCC Foundation scholarship which made college a reality. “I can’t even begin to describe how happy I was that day the letter arrived,” says Jen. “I felt like I had won the lottery. I checked the letter again first thing in the morning to make sure I wasn’t dreaming. “Being a student was exhausting and hard, but I would remind myself that somewhere, someone out there truly believed in me,” she says. “Even though I didn’t have the honor of meeting my donor, the support kept me going. I pushed harder and tried harder, because I did not want to let anyone down.”

Starting classes again in the fall, she felt she had lost all confidence in a successful return, Linda says. However, that November there was good news: a full COCC Foundation scholarship. “There are no words eloquent enough to adequately express what receiving this scholarship has meant to me,” she says. “I was experiencing disbelief, shock, happiness, awe and absolute gratitude all at the same time. I could not believe it.”

“This gift gave me the strength, courage and confidence to move beyond my fears about returning to school. I want the donors to know that this very special gift gave me back my future.”

As Linda Yates prepared to welcome a granddaughter, she received news that would change the direction of her life. The baby girl had Down’s Syndrome. When the parents returned to work, she became her granddaughter’s caregiver. It was then that she learned about the Alyce Hatch Center, the home of Deschutes County’s Early Intervention Program. “These incredible teachers, therapists and aides opened my consciousness and gave inspiration to my future direction,” says Linda. “These early efforts were going to make all the difference in the lives of children with special needs.”

One of her granddaughter’s therapists encouraged Linda to earn a degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE). “Her example as a dedicated and loving educator has shown me what it takes to be an exceptional teacher in this field,” she says.

As she started taking ECE classes and working in classrooms, Linda knew she had found her passion: this is what she wanted to do for the rest of her life. However, in the spring of her second year, she suffered a heart attack and underwent quadruple bypass surgery, which necessitated a third year of school to complete her degree.

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Born and raised on the Warm Springs Reservation, Truman Merrifield plans to assist the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (CTWS) with resource management after he completes his education. After starting out at the Madras Campus, Truman now makes a 120-mile roundtrip drive to attend classes in Bend. He is on track to complete both the Forest Resources Technology degree and the Wildland/Fuels Management degree next summer. In addition, he is currently serving as the president of the Associated Students of COCC.

“Thanks to COCC Foundation scholarships last year and this year, I have assistance with my tuition, living costs, transportation and books,” says Truman. “I can’t express enough how much the generous and benevolent donors have helped me and my family.”

Truman presently works as a Fuels Technician for the CTWS in the Fire Management department in Warm Springs. After completing his associate’s degrees, he plans to transfer to a four-year university.

“After completing my degrees, I plan to return to the Warm Springs Reservation to assist the CTWS with past, current and future management issues in our natural resources and traditional first foods,” he says. “I hope to apply my education to help protect, preserve and enhance resource management for generations to come.

“With financial support from donors, lives are changed and the work force gains educated and experienced workers,” says Truman. “I believe I can speak for other scholarship recipients when I say thank you; we are truly filled with gratitude.”

Linda Williams is part of the COCC College Relations department.
The following individuals, businesses and foundations are generous friends of the Central Oregon Community College. The following individuals, businesses and foundations are generous friends of the Central Oregon Community College. Have worked to have an accurate list, but encourage you to call Brittany Nichols 541.383.7582 if you have any questions.

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