

LEGACIES

Central Oregon Community College Foundation Magazine Fall 2016



Dr. Shirley I. Metcalf
Vision of 'Ohana

Central Oregon Symphony

Redmond Solar Array

Foundation Scholarships

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Letter From the President

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. These 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 Brittany 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. I especially enjoyed getting to know one of the writers, Angela Reid, who wrote the story about me, but I also want to thank Cathy Carroll and Emily Woodworth who brought great insight to the articles about the Symphony and the Early Childhood Education program.

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
COCC President

Luminary Scholarships

— by Zak Boone —

At Central Oregon Community College we recognize that our esteemed students come from a variety of backgrounds, and each has a unique life story. Sometimes our students' lives take an unexpected turn while they're enrolled in classes. For many students, even just one additional bill or unexpected financial obligation is enough to put their educational dreams on hold. Two very generous donors, Judy and Gary Heck, decided to do something for students facing these types of hurdles and started the Luminary emergency fund back in 2005 to address them.

"Gary and I both grew up in humble circumstances, and understand the struggle it takes to realize a future vision and stick with it. After speaking with COCC Foundation staff about sponsoring one single parent through their two-year program, we became convinced that we could do more by offering help to multiple students. While help was already available via traditional scholarships and grants, we wanted to help make sure that day to day financial obstacles wouldn't cause a good, responsible and committed student to drop out," stated Judy Heck. Thanks to their early vision and financial support, the

fund was launched, and currently exists as a collaboration between the COCC Foundation and additional private donors interested in helping students who are on a solid path to graduation with clear educational and career goals.* Since inception, Luminary funds have directly assisted 155 COCC students.

As in years past, successful Luminary fund recipients for the 2015-2016 year demonstrated an enormous amount of strength, thoughtfulness and dedication. Whether through volunteer activities, raising a family, or helping other students, Luminary fund recipients offer themselves selflessly to others while working diligently toward their educational goals. Most often, Luminary fund applicants request assistance from the Fund as their last resort. Students facing unexpected financial challenges often feel isolated or embarrassed by their circumstances, but the opportunity through the Luminary fund offers students a sense of community and support.

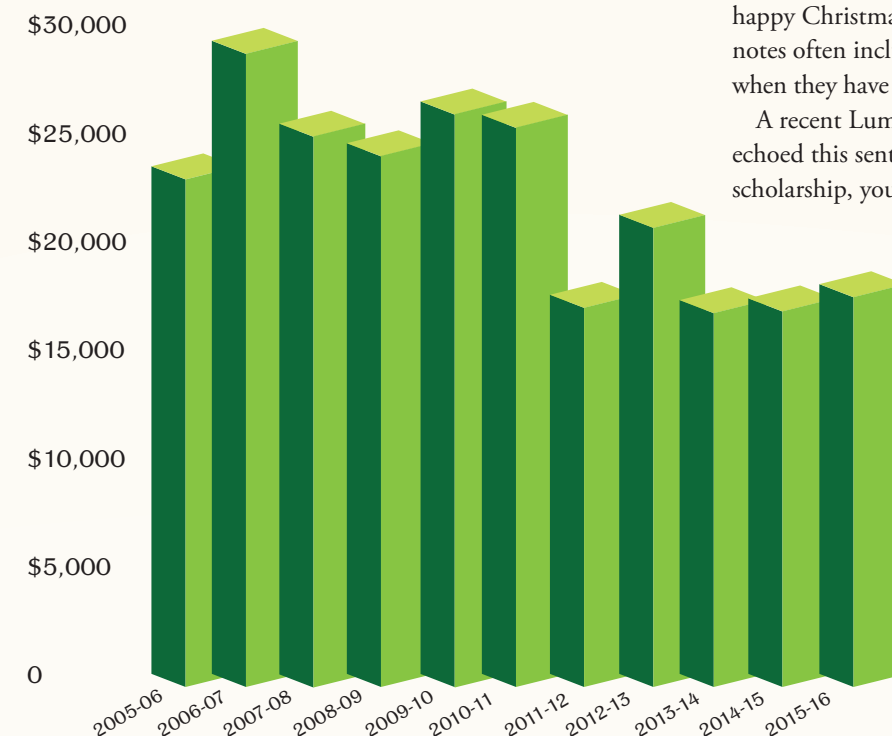
"A past recipient was a single father who was struggling simply to get to school because of an aging, breaking down truck," added Heck. "He was working two jobs and still could not afford to have the truck fixed in a timely fashion. After he received the Luminary scholarship, we received a 'thank you' note from not only the dad, but from his two young daughters in their own handwriting! They said their dad would have a happy Christmas because of our help. Students' thank you notes often include the idea that they will help someone in need when they have the opportunity – it doesn't get better than that!"

A recent Luminary recipient who earned her nursing degree echoed this sentiment: "By awarding me the Luminary fund scholarship, you have lightened my financial burden, allowing me to focus on the most important aspect of school, learning. I hope one day I will be able to help others as you have helped me, as a teacher, as a healer and hopefully, as a financial supporter!"

**Luminary fund recipients must have a 3.0 GPA and be nearing graduation (preference is given to students who are within two terms of finishing their area of study).*

Zak Boone is the executive director of the COCC Foundation.

LUMINARY FUNDS DISBURSED



WE ARE 'OHANA

Dr. Shirley Metcalf's Approach to Leadership and Life

— by Angela Reid —

It doesn'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 people," she says, with disarming sincerity. "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 her, there really are no strangers. "The

people in my life make me who I am," she says. As she expands on this

statement, she also demonstrates it, drawing on the wisdom of others – from Colin Powell and Malcolm Gladwell, to her family, friends and colleagues in Hawaii and on the mainland. 'Dr. Shirley,' as she is known by her faculty and staff, is a living, breathing, smiling representation of 'ohana.

'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.

"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.



Timothy Park



NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

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 down, they will stand right back up. "Seven times down, eight times up," she says, quoting a Japanese proverb.

Born in Hawaii to a Japanese father and a Chinese mother, Dr. Metcalf is also one of few women in leadership in higher education, a distinction she shares with Oregon State University (OSU)-Cascades president Becky Johnson. For COCC, diversity and tolerance are not merely platitudes – they are represented in the highest position at the college. Karen Roth, Director of Multicultural Activities, says, "Dr. Metcalf is a positive role model

for how to respect the differences that exist among us."

Citing enrollment statistics for COCC that point to ethnic, gender, age and socio-economic diversity, it's evident that 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 busts, and dropped during economic booms. 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."

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, and also may receive assistance for books, transportation or other college expenses – helping lower-income students to not just enroll in college, but also to stick with it.

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.'" Or in the words of Lilo and Stitch, the Disney characters arguably responsible for introducing 'ohana to the mainland, "No one gets left behind."

In the COCC 'ohana, there is always common ground. ■

Angela Reid is a freelance writer living in Bend.

Timothy Park

FALL HIGHLIGHTS

OCTOBER

October 1-31

Latino Heritage Month

Participate in fun events celebrating the Latino culture all month long.

October 5

The Electoral College: History and Controversy

Dr. Priscilla Southwell, political science professor, University of Oregon, will speak about the history of the electoral college.

October 6-30

Scott Sonniksen

Peruse Sonniksen's artwork at the Pinckney Center on the COCC Bend campus.

October 11

Ukiyo-e: Japanese Pop Culture and 'The Floating World'

Dr. Ann Wetherell, assistant professor of art history, Willamette University, discusses the social and political context of Japanese woodblock prints.

October 19

COCC Crook County Open Campus 5th Anniversary

Help us celebrate five years of serving students and the community.

October 22-24

Central Oregon Symphony

Enjoy harmonic sounds of COS with guest artist 3 Leg Torso.

October 25

The Suicide Epidemic: A Difficult Conversation our Community Must Have

Panel discussion with local experts and community members.

NOVEMBER

November 1-30

Native American Heritage Month

Participate in fun events celebrating the Native American culture all month long.

November 3-30

Christian Brown

Enjoy Brown's paintings and sculptures at the Pinckney Center on the COCC Bend campus.

November 4

Bridging Differences in a New Culture: An Immigrant's Journey

Award-winning author, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, will share her immigrant experience through the themes found in her books.

November 16

Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians But Were Afraid to Ask

Ojibwe scholar and cultural preservationist, Dr. Anton Treuer, will build a foundation for true understanding of Native Americans.

November 20

Central Oregon Chamber Orchestra

Enjoy Duo Horns and Alphorns, Andreas Lang and Tim Lynch.

MORE

For more information and a full event schedule for the Nancy R. Chandler Visiting Scholar Program, visit: cocc.edu/foundation/vsp.

For more information on all campus-wide events, visit: cocc.edu/whats-new-calendar



“Four-year-olds are the smartest people on the planet. Their ideas aren’t silly—they are as valid as anyone else’s”

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 cafe, 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

educators, and advises, by choice, about 100 students, in addition to teaching 45 credits yearly. When she’s not doing all of that, Amy enjoys nabbing time with her daughter (12) and son (10) – or feeding 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. I’m always trying new things.” For her, on a very serious level, humor, play and wonder are essential to both teaching and learning, and that keeps her profession engaging.

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,” and that sentiment informs not only the playful way she educates, but also how she lives life. “Learning becomes more approachable if we retain a childlike willingness to not know, and solve problems from there,” says Howell. In fact, Howell has great respect for the wondrous perspectives of children. “Four-year-olds are the smartest people on the planet,” she says with absolute conviction. “Their ideas aren’t silly – they are as valid as anyone else’s.” This attitude naturally overflows into her personal life. Although older than four, her daughter 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.

Broken Crayons

Changing the System with Dr. Amy Howell

— by Emily Woodworth —



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.

Of course, life as a full-time professor and now mother of two can be hectic. Professionally, Howell is in demand for both on- and off-campus duties. She serves on internal college committees, works on grants with the COCC Foundation, fosters relationships with local school district representatives and private

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 been addressing 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 usually whimsical gaze as she continues, "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 graduated), to the grandmother who spent her life helping others, survived a heart attack, and still fulfilled her lifelong dream of an Associate of Applied Science degree in Childhood Education. "For

students, scholarships represent an invitation to think differently, act courageously and move forward," says Amy. "They communicate the message that others value their contributions." Perhaps that's why Amy claims, "I'm a total sap on commencement day."

In addition to scholarships, Amy has pioneered new programs for her students. In 2014, she and the Foundation were awarded the Partners in Practice Grant from the Department of Education, benefiting students entering ECE with experience, but no formal training, and those who had been historically under-represented in higher education. Though some funds supported established programs, a portion went toward a new peer mentoring initiative, hiring students as liaisons between COCC and the industry to advise newcomers. "Students 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, that means play. She's chosen to see 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.

Timothy Park



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 504KW 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 renewal 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 2.1 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.

Mary Ann Asson-Batres, Ph.D., is COCC's Grants Coordinator.



Harmonic Convergence

COCC celebrates its creation of the Central Oregon Symphony 50 years ago and continued cultural connection with community

— by Cathy Carroll —

Conductor Michael Gesme's arms are aloft, baton in hand, leading the Central Oregon Symphony in an 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 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 hear."

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

orchestra has grown from sixty to eighty-five. In 2009, COCC built a dedicated rehearsal space for the symphony as part of COCC's Coats Campus Center. Wille Hall, constructed with a bequest from the Paul and Fran Wille estate, offers an acoustically sound home for rehearsals and performances of vocal and chamber music, as well as lectures and other events.

Many, however, point to Gesme's musical talent, dedication and charismatic personality as being key to the symphony's growth and importance in the community since he joined the College in 1996.

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 overhear audience members saying "Wow!" and people new to the area remark on the caliber of the concerts.

Back in the COCC classroom, Gesme teaches courses including music theory, ear training, music history, and conducting. As music director of COSA, he strives never to repeat the same work, chooses the guest artists, and writes program notes aimed at classical music neophytes, in addition to his engaging explanations at each performance.

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 symphony to many

who have never heard of it before.

As 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.

And his dream performance piece? Gesme prefaces by saying he tries hard to play to the ensemble's strengths, and loves presenting the traditional repertoire, obscure works by well-known composers,

great works by relatively unknown composers and relatively new works, too. 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.

Benjamin Edwards



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 About 800 current and past orchestra members are invited to join COSA donors to celebrate the symphony's fiftieth anniversary.
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STUDENT SUCCESS

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



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 ANESTHESIA GROUP

Foundation Scholarships: Dreams Within Reach

— by Linda Williams —



Jen Lester



Linda Yates



Truman Merrifield

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.

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."

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 in January 2014, Jen earned a degree in Health Information Technology last June. Thanks to the scholarship, she was able to attend school full time and complete the program in two, rather than in three or four years of part-time attendance. Not only can she now help her kids with their math homework, she has also set her sights on a bachelor's degree.

"To the donors of the COCC Foundation, I say thank you so much for supporting my dreams and helping me become who I am today. I thank you and my kids thank you. COCC Foundation donors really do matter. We couldn't have done it without you."

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.

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The following individuals, businesses and foundations are generous friends of the Central Oregon Community College Foundation who gave cash gifts between January 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016. We have worked to have an accurate list, but encourage you to call Brittany Nichols 541.383.7582 if you find an error. Most of all, to those who give: Thank you!

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