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The Blazer Bulletin

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**2020
Distinguished
Alumnus**

Pages 6-7





Letter From Centralia College Foundation

Everything is moving and changing very quickly these days and although I am writing this in early April, by the time we print this bulletin, and you receive it in the mail, our situation could completely change.

Maybe we will all be outdoors together running through fields of tulips.

But more likely, we will still be finding our way through the many complexities of COVID-19 in our communities.

Currently, the campus is closed and staff is all working remotely. Next week will be the start of spring classes - all remote classes (except some labs that must be done in person). Can you imagine that, ALL remote classes. What a feat for all of our faculty to have accomplished this! I know our students are going to have adjustments as well and I am confident they will adjust,

login, learn, and continue with their education plans in grand fashion.

College staff have been doing extraordinary work. Facilities staff has been cleaning the buildings to safeguard us when we return. Student services staff has been helping students get everything they need to be successful in the classroom, and administration and the business office have been paying the bills and making sure everyone is on track for the future. Such great enthusiasm and hard work from everyone.

At the foundation office, we are all keeping very busy working from our homes. I am completely

impressed with the services IT has set up for us so that we can access everything we need remotely. I must admit that I can still do everything I need, but I am slower at accomplishing tasks on my remote desktop and am still getting used to online meetings. Tyler is working on scholarship awarding and Kylea is working on projects with our donor and new accounting software. All events are cancelled for spring, so we are getting ahead on other tasks.

One place where we could use help from you - a place where you can make a big difference. That is our emergency fund. Students are in need right now. They need help



CC staff (L to R): Connie Smejkal, Jake Fay, Steve Ward, Joyce Hammer, and William Westmoreland



CC Foundation board and staff (L to R): Kylea Johnson, Mark Scheibmeir, John Klumper, Christine Fossett, Peter Abbarno, Tyler Kaut, Jim Sherrill

with personal supplies, food, and books. With the remote classroom situation, some of them now need hardware to get online access to their classes.

You can make a difference to them now with a donation to our emergency fund. We are taking mailed-in gifts and gifts posted to our website to benefit this fund. Please consider whether you could offer assistance today. If not, we appreciate you thinking of our students when you are able. A direct link to the secure donation page on our website is www.centralia.edu/foundation/donate.aspx.

Although the physical campus is empty of many people, we are all still working to benefit the great students who attend Centralia College. The SWFT Center is progressing toward readiness for next year's students, and the faculty and staff are more prepared than ever to help students succeed and learn.

As we move through this crisis and ahead toward a more normal time, know that your college and foundation are ready and we will "keep the doors open" even though it may be done remotely for now.

My thanks for your support of the foundation and Centralia College students.

Best wishes and good health,
Christine Fossett
Executive Director

Board Members Biographies



Brendan VanderVelde

New Board Member

As the operations manager at Hemphill-O'Neill Company, Brendan, in close collaboration with company owners, leaders, and the board, plans, budgets, and manages operations for all forestland activities. Prior to working for Hemphill O'Neill, Brendan served as the budget director for the state Attorney General's Office. Brendan received a Bachelor of Commerce in Finance and Accounting from the University of Ottawa, Canada, and a Master's in Business Administration from the University of Washington. He is keen to serve the local community and help promote investment in Centralia College. Brendan currently lives in Centralia with his wife Erin and their four young children.



John Klumper

Board Member Since 2015

John Klumper was injured while working in the timber industry and went back to Centralia College about 10 years after high school. He took classes towards a business degree and earned his real estate license in 1990. He is now in charge of business development at Lewis County Title. He said the college's retraining program helped redirect his life and now, some 30 years later, he is helping make decisions on the foundation board that directly impact many. John reminds everyone, "Don't go chasing waterfalls."



Brian Watson

New Board Member

Brian Watson is the regional executive sales manager for Lafromboise Communications, the parent company of The Chronicle. A former Centralia College student himself, Brian also has a daughter who attended CC. Brian and his wife Jen have been married for 15 years, and they have four children and one grandchild, with another on the way. They enjoy spending time together outside as an active family. Brian said he's honored to serve on the foundation board to enhance the education and the lives of students.

Donor Notes



Thanks to the help of Jim Rang and Modern Machinery, we recently received a \$5,000 gift for diesel and engine repair scholarships from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation.

Two of Pete Corwin's children have added to the scholarship in his name to benefit a music student. Thanks, Renee Corwin-Rey and Jeremy Corwin.

Two brothers, Howard and Richard Batie, continue to promote the Batie Science Scholarship each year to keep students focused on their education.

Thomas Lockhart has donated to the Centralia Arts Support Team (C.A.S.T) with a donation for needed equipment purchases.

Altrusa is one of our many local service groups that support a scholarship each year. Their support continues with a \$1,000 for a nursing student this fall.

Kristy Shanafelt and Susan Austin have created a scholarship for Running Start students from W.F. West High School to assist with books and lab expenses.

Sylvia Freund has been a steadfast supporter of our students. She regularly contributes to the scholarship in her late husband's name. The Vic Freund scholarship is for students studying a foreign language.

Members of the Class of '63 established a scholarship for a general studies student in 2011. Janet Rusin and Dave Blanchard, both class members, have recently donated to that effort. Fellow class members who have recently donated to other scholarships include Stanley Moon, Nadine Murphy, Luana Graves, Penny and Mike Merriman, Susan Miller and Marilyn Weinstein. Way to go, Class of '63!

Since September 2012, Thorlea Kirtz has been donating each month to the scholarship her mother began. The scholarship was established in 1989 and continues to grow thanks to the generosity of Thorlea.

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If you are 70 1/2 or older the IRS requires you to take a required minimum distribution from your IRA, 401k, or 457(b) retirement account. This distribution is taxed. For some people this distribution may be unnecessary at times.

You can donate all or a portion of your distribution directly to benefit a student's education. This saves you from paying the tax and provides an impactful donation to help a student improve their life.



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The Centralia College Foundation is a registered 501(c)3. Tax ID #91-1195403

Laura Dolezal: From Centralia College to the State Crime Lab



When you hear Laura Dolezal is a DNA analyst at the Washington State Patrol Crime Lab in Vancouver, your impression of what that means likely stems from decades of detective shows on TV.

It's not that at all.

“It's a lot less glamorous. We're not running around in high heels, that's for sure,” Laura said with a laugh. “A single case can take years of testing and analysis, and going to court. We don't have results in an hour.”

Laura grew up in Centralia and had finished the most advanced math classes at Centralia High School in her sophomore year. She found the challenge she needed at Centralia College through the Running Start program.

“I started with just one class a quarter – pre-calculus to calculus 2,” she said. “I ended up with two degrees – an associate in science and an associate in arts.”

Initially, Laura wasn't sure what she wanted to do or what she wanted to study in college. She knew she loved science, especially biology, but she didn't want to go into medicine or research. Her advisor helped her see a third option.

“Science always made sense to me. I enjoyed learning how the body works. My advisor at the time helped me come up with forensic science as an option,” she recalled. “Forensic science brought me the science I loved, plus the critical thinking, and it played into my interest in solving puzzles.”

After CC, Laura transferred first to Western Washington University, where she earned her bachelor's degree in cellular and molecular biology, then to George Washington University in Washington, DC, where she earned her master's degree in forensic science. Being in “the other Washington” opened up career and internship opportunities she never imagined and she spent five years in Maryland doing DNA

analysis to identify the human remains of soldiers from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

“I loved the work. It was very rewarding to help people find their family members after so many years, but I missed Washington,” she said. “The environment was calling me back.”

Laura started working at the WSP Crime Lab in Vancouver in 2013. She conducts DNA analysis for criminal investigations. She's assigned a case and follows it through to the end, sometimes for several years.

“A lot of evidence doesn't give helpful results and you have to keep asking yourself, ‘What can I try now?’” she said. “You really have to enjoy the puzzle-solving. You have to read the results and the conclusions for what they are and not make assumptions. You have to be unbiased in everything.”

Laura said enrolling in Running Start at CC gave her options she couldn't have had in high school, and helped lead her to a career she loves.

“Centralia College set me up very well,” she said. “It wasn't a hard transition. I felt like the classes were a good size, and I was able to be as independent as I needed to be. I was in high school, but I felt like any other college student. Plus, I was able to get a really strong foundation in science, which led to me finding my career.”

2020 Distinguished Alumnus

Jimmy Ritchey



The Centralia College Foundation is honored to announce Jimmy Ritchey as the 2020 Distinguished Alumnus. Ritchey is a country music songwriter and record producer who has worked with some of the biggest superstars in country music over an impressive career spanning over 25 years in Nashville.

Ritchey grew up in a musical family in Centralia. His great-great grandparents had a band and both grandmothers and several uncles were musicians. He began playing in childhood and went on to master the mandolin, acoustic guitar, banjo, bass, fiddle and electric guitar.

In his late teens, he began commuting to Seattle, where he worked as an accompanist for country stars such as Bobby Bare, Ferlin Husky and Del Reeves, when they were touring in the Pacific Northwest. In between these gigs, Ritchey played in local bands and attended classes at Centralia College from about 1987-90. It was CC instructor Ken Kimball that drew him to the campus.

"Ken Kimball, my music professor, was a fantastic music theory professor," Ritchey said.

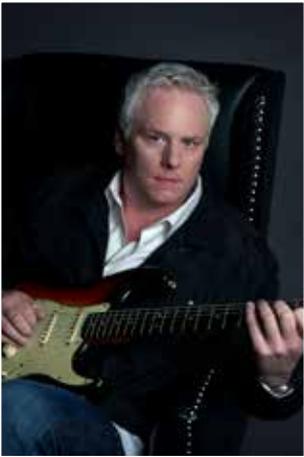
"I apply things I learned from Ken Kimble every day in my profession. He was the number one reason I went to school there."

He didn't know it at the time, but another class he took at CC would pay off in his future.

"Larry Fagerness' law class was fantastic, as well," Ritchey added. "Having to deal with contracts in all aspects of my life and business, has been helpful to understand legal language early on. I actually represented my band in court when we couldn't afford an attorney over some concert dates that were contracted and then canceled. We won."

In 1995, Ritchey moved to Nashville and found almost immediate success. In just 10 years, Ritchey co-wrote four top-10 hits, produced albums for more than 10 artists, played guitar on dozens of recording sessions, and created his own song-publishing company, Vibe Room Music. He has also toured coast-to-coast as a road musician.

As a songwriter, Jimmy Ritchey has earned wide respect with George Strait's "I Gotta Get to You" and "Twang," Terri Clark's "If You Want Fire," Mark



Chesnutt's "Things to Do in Wichita" and Jake Owen's career breakthroughs "Don't Think I Can't Love You," "Startin' With Me" and "The One That Got Away." He has also co-written songs recorded by Montgomery Gentry, Kellie Pickler, Joe Nichols, Mark Wills, David Nail, Clay Walker, William Michael Morgan, Trace Adkins and others. More than 40 of Ritchey's songs have been recorded by major artists.

Ritchey has won awards from the Broadcast Music, Inc. and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers for his work with both Jake Owen and Kenney Chesney.

As a producer, Ritchey crafted Tommy Shane Steiner's "Then Came the Night" album and its hit 2002 single "What If She's an Angel." He was also behind Clay Walker's "A Few Questions" 2003 CD and his hit singles "I Can't Sleep" and "A Few Questions". Blaine Larsen's "Not Too Bad for a Good Ole Boy", Joanna Smith's "Country Like Me" and Greg Bates' big hit of 2012 "Did it for the Girl" are Jimmy Ritchey productions, as are the Jake Owen collections "Startin' with Me" (2006) and "Easy Does It" (2008).

He also produced William Michael Morgan, "I Met a Girl", which went to No. 1 in 2017.

"I Met a Girl" is the longest running song to hit No. 1 in Mediabase/Aircheck history at 49 weeks. It also spent 58 weeks at radio.

His studio credits as a musician include such artists as Tracy Lawrence, Jill King, Sara Evans, Vince Gill, Tracy Byrd, Chuck Wicks, Randy Travis, Bobby Bare, Lee Ann Womack, Richie McDonald, Ted Nugent, Randy Owen, Jim Lauderdale and Daryle Singletary. He estimates that he has been an instrumentalist on more than 25 artists' records to date.

Ritchey's Vibe Room Music, founded in 2008, has published songs recorded by Keith Urban, Billy Currington, The Henningsens and Kenny Chesney ("Come Over"), as well as his hits with Owen and Strait. The company's "Somewhere South of Crazy," co-written by Pam Tillis, was nominated for Song of the Year at the 2012 International Bluegrass Music Awards.

Jimmy Ritchey has worked to develop the careers several of Nashville's now bright stars when they were first newcomers, succeeding in obtaining their first publishing deals and recording contracts. That list includes Jake Owen, Sam Hunt, Greg Bates and William Michael Morgan.

Jimmy Ritchey is currently

working with newly signed Sony Nashville recording Artist Robert Counts (who recently released his first single), Pam Tillis, Mark Chesnutt as well as a new project with Jon Secada who has sold over 30 million records and won three Grammys.

He continues to write songs every day and develop the careers of other Nashville artists.

He also spends a significant amount of time in the community volunteering at local schools to mentor and instruct students. His success allows him to give back to organizations by donating his time and talents performing at events to raise funds, most recently for the Leukemia/ Lymphoma Society, Operation Song for Veterans, and the March of Dimes.

Jimmy returns to Centralia often to visit family and friends and the occasional performance. He said he still turns often to our own Cal Taylor, a lifelong friend, as his "go-to" any time he has a technical music related questions.

At this time, the traditional commencement will not be held in June. We will celebrate Jimmy's induction at the 2021 commencement.

2020 Sports Hall of Fame Inductees



On Feb. 8, Centralia College inducted four new members to its Sports Hall of Fame.

Following a raucous luncheon filled with laughs and great memories, the official induction ceremony was held at halftime of the women's basketball game in the Michael Smith Gymnasium on campus.



Rudy Gideon
1956-58
Baseball

Gideon is part of the what is commonly called "the last generation that did not play Little League baseball," and went on to be a standout player at CC and beyond. In 1957, Gideon and the Blazers won the southwest conference championship. Gideon was also the college's valedictorian that year. He went on to play one year in the Chicago Cubs farm system, in the Appalachian League, and attended spring training with the Cubs in 1958. He coached Babe Ruth and Little League teams for more than a decade, and umpired Little League games for four years.



Richard Moore
1962-64
Basketball & Baseball

At CC, Moore was part of the Fearsome Threesome with Michael Smith and Jerry "Hardrock" Woods. He went on to play basketball in Castle Rock for 15 years and fastpitch for more than 20 years. He played on Longview's Boondox Tavern team, which won the men's Washington State Fastpitch Championships. He umpired high school and college baseball for more than 50 years and for high school and college softball for 25 years. He also was a referee for high school football and basketball for 30 years.



Skip Friese
1956-57
Track,
Baseball,
Football, &
Basketball

Friese lettered at CC six times – twice each in football and basketball, and once each in track and baseball. He was known as a quick, speedy, and scrappy player who led by example. His work ethic was legendary. At only 5'7" tall, he averaged 18 points per game in basketball and was in the starting lineup for two years in both football and basketball.



Marcus Hinton
2005-06
Basketball

Hinton averaged 23 points per game and led the league in scoring. He was the team captain and led the team to a fifth place finish in the conference tournament. He was named to the first team all-league and made the NWAACC All-Star second team. He was heavily recruited and went on to earn a Division 1 scholarship from Eastern Washington University, where he was named team captain. At EWU, he went 6 for 6, setting a single-game record for 3-point percentage. He made the Dean's List twice and graduated with a 3.5 GPA.

High School-College Partnership Yielding Big Gains for Chehalis Students

In 2017, the Chehalis Foundation and the Chehalis School District formalized a partnership with Centralia College to support WF West High School students beyond high school. The Chehalis Student Achievement Initiative aims to get 60 percent of WF West students to earn a college or vocational credential past high school.

To get there, the foundation funded several initiatives at Centralia College (CC), including a robust summer program for graduating seniors, additional support for math, peer mentoring, social engagement, and a staff person at the college dedicated to WF West graduates at CC.

Those efforts are paying off.

Forty-nine percent of WF West's Class of 2017 graduated from CC within two years of finishing high school. That's a 10 percent increase over WF West graduates from 2015 and 2016.

So far, the WF West Class of 2018 is showing even bigger gains. Already, in only a year, 37 percent have graduated from CC.

"We couldn't be happier with the initial results of this program. We haven't reached

the finish line yet, but we are out of the blocks and have set a really good pace," said Robert Cox, vice president of Student Services at CC. "Chehalis School District employees and college staff are collaborating like never before to increase college completion."

Since its launch with WF West graduates in 2017, the college has expanded several of these programs to all students and is working to add additional services.

"From the beginning of this partnership, the Chehalis Foundation and Centralia College have treated this as a pilot program. It was always our plan to expand the successful elements across the college. What we have learned from this partnership is already being applied to benefit other students," said Bob Mohrbacher, Centralia College president.



Matthew Rounsley, Centralia College Class of 2020

When Matthew Rounsley tells people he wants to go into politics, he gets one of two reactions.

“They either say, ‘Ugh, politics!’ and ask why I would ever want to do that, or they say, ‘Good for you, we need someone like you in politics,’” he said. “Either way, I know I’m in it for the right reasons and I want to make a difference.”



During the legislative session earlier this year, Rounsley, 21, worked as one of only two interns in the state for the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). For about 20 hours a week, he went to committee hearings, monitored various meetings, and testified when needed before the state House and Senate on issues affecting higher education students. He earned five college credits for the experience.

"It was so exciting, very busy," he said. "Every week we met with a different person on the SBCTC staff to learn about some aspect of the college system and we had legislative strategy sessions every Thursday to discuss the prior week of the session and the week ahead. There were a lot of bills and things were always changing."

Rounsley didn't always plan to go into politics. In fact, he initially wanted to teach agriculture. He grew up on a farm and got involved with the Future Farmers of America in high school. After graduating from Tenino High School as valedictorian, he took a year off to serve as a state officer for FFA. Part of that work included a couple weeks in Olympia learning about political relations and advocacy.

"I loved it," he said. "I decided I wanted to be a lobbyist for agricultural issues or hold an elected

office that supports agriculture and farmers."

Rounsley is completing his associate in arts and was able to attend CC tuition-free thanks to the foundation's Valedictorian Scholarship. He was recently selected to represent CC as one of two members of the All-Washington Academic Team. He is president of both the CC chapter of Phi Theta Kappa the Greater Northwest Region chapter of Phi Theta Kappa.

"I'm a first-generation college student," he said. "My family is so excited for me. They've always encouraged me to go to college. I'm so grateful for all the support I've received from my family, from Jody Peterson (CC's Phi Theta Kappa advisor), from all my teachers. It's been a great experience."

He expects to transfer to a four-year college in the fall to study political science.

You can help Centralia College students of all majors and interests with a tax-deductible donation toward scholarships. Gifts to a general study or specific scholarship can be made on our website at www.centralia.edu/foundation/donate.aspx.





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