

2024

Recipients of the Centralia College Foundation

LEGACY AWARD

Since 2023, the Centralia College Foundation's Legacy Award is given annually to an individual or group who has shown dedication, commitment, and contribution to the mission of Centralia College. The recipients are not required to be Centralia College alumni and the Legacy Award may be given posthumously. We proudly present the recipients of the Centralia College Foundation Legacy Award.



2024 Legacy Award

Larry McGee



In 2011, Larry McGee was the executive director of the Chehalis Renaissance Team (now Experience Chehalis). He had a list of projects with 85 items on it. He was ticking them off when Centralia College President Jim Walton (retired) called him out of the blue.

“I had no idea what he wanted, but I went to meet him anyway,” McGee said. “He wanted me to start a bachelor’s degree program in business. I had never worked on a college campus before. I knew nothing about it and I initially turned him down, but he didn’t give up.”

After a trip to Columbia Basin College, where he learned about the importance of bachelor’s degrees to the college and the community, McGee changed his mind and agreed to spearhead Centralia College’s first bachelor’s degree.

It was a grueling 10-month project with complicated proposals to the state, the college’s accreditors, and the Department of Education, plus recruiting students, hiring faculty, developing education plans and courses, and much more. But, it paid off in September 2012, when CC welcomed the first cohort of students into the Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management program.

McGee intended to stay at Centralia College for just 18 months, long enough to get the bachelor’s degree off the ground. He was asked to stay a bit longer and to help launch the college’s second bachelor’s degree in Diesel Technology.

“I stayed for two and a half years total,” he said. “It was the best time of my working life. I loved my time at the college.”

Centralia College now has five bachelor’s degrees and McGee has moved on to other projects. He’s a founding member and current chair for the new Discover! Children’s Museum planned for downtown Centralia. He’s also on the board for the United Learning Center, the multi-agency complex that will be home to the new children’s museum. The project has just broken ground. McGee is as busy as ever, but Centralia College always has a soft spot in his heart.

“The faculty here is not driven by research and research grants,” he said. “They’re here to educate students. They show a great deal of concern for the students. A lot of students have tough situations and there’s a great deal of care here. Sincere care and concern.”

2023 Legacy Award

Dave Blanchard



Dave Blanchard, a decorated Vietnam veteran and educator. Blanchard passed away on Sept. 29, 2022, and was a lifetime supporter of Centralia College and its students.

Blanchard was born and raised in Centralia. He was a star athlete at Centralia High School, where he was elected president of the student body in 1960-61, a position his father held 25 years earlier. In 1963, he graduated from Centralia College, where he was also elected student body president.

After graduation, he received a Congressional appointment to the US Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. He graduated in 1967 with a degree in engineering and accepted a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army. In 1968, he was deployed to Vietnam, where he earned two Purple Hearts (twice wounded in combat), two Bronze Stars for heroism and acts of valor in armed combat, and a Valorous Unit Award.

After retiring from active Army service, Blanchard earned his doctorate and served as the dean of graduate students at Hofstra University in New York. Later, he taught as an adjunct professor at St. John's University. Though he never lived in Centralia again, he maintained tight connections to the community and established and supported a scholarship at Centralia College in the name of the Class of 1963.

Before his death, Blanchard wrote about the impact CC had on his life.

“Centralia is one of the major highlights of my life and I know for a fact that if I had not attended this great community college, I would not have made it through my first year at West Point,” he wrote in 2009. “In my long career, both in the military and in higher education, when the opportunity arose, I firmly stated that my two-year college education prepared me for the rest of my life.”



Our West Point Graduate - Lt Dave Blanchard - preflight Vietnam 1968 - Thank you, Mel Petrie, for sending

Legacy Award Nominations

The Centralia College Foundation Legacy Award Committee accepts nominations continuously. The award is given annually to an individual or group who has shown dedication, commitment, and contribution to the mission of Centralia College. The recipients are not required to be Centralia College alumni and the Legacy Award may be given posthumously. All past nominees are reconsidered each year.

Please send nominations to
ccfoundation@centralia.edu

Submit a nomination online at
www.centralia.edu/foundation



www.centralia.edu/foundation • 360-623-8942 • ccfoundation@centralia.edu

This information is accurate at time of publication.