

Forty and Fabulous



On March 29, Clark College's Mature Learning program celebrated its 40th anniversary by doing what it does best: providing diverse learning opportunities and a warm and welcoming community for seniors in Southwest Washington.

Guests who attended the half-day event, which was held at Clark College at Columbia Tech Center, were able to attend free "mini-classes" taught by favorite instructors from the program on topics as diverse as t'ai chi, the genetics of human evolution, drawing, and Benjamin Franklin's time in Paris, to name just a few.



Mature Learning Program Manager Tracy Reilly Kelly, keynote speaker Dr. Larry Sherman, and Associate Vice President of Corporate & Continuing Education Kevin Kussman

The half-day event also featured a guest lecture from OHSU neuroscientist Dr. Larry Sherman, who spoke about his work figuring out how to, as he said, “fix a damaged brain—from trauma, stroke, Alzheimer disease or aging.” He said that the purpose of his work is to keep the brain active for as long as possible, which is a major aim of the Mature Learning program as well.

“We truly do revere and respect our mature learners at Clark College,” said Clark College President Bob Knight during the opening event. “Not only are you students, you’re advocates for the college. We want to have a thriving program for you.”

Over its history, the Mature Learning program has grown to be one of the core offerings that Clark College provides, said Kevin Kussman, Associate Vice President of Corporate & Continuing Education. “More than ever we need to work to make sure people stay active and connected to their community,” he said during his speech to event attendees.

It’s worked for Garda Hoffman and Elizabeth Gold, who became close friends after meeting in a Mature Learning classroom.

"I've made a great many friends via this program," said Hofmann. "It is stimulating. It fills a great need in the community for older people."

Though Mature Learning students may not have homework, "these are real college classes," said Mature Learning volunteer and student Margaret Zuke. All instructors are either college professors or experts in their field.



"There's nothing better than having such an engaged group of students," said Steve Carlson. Once a Clark College student himself, then Clark faculty in 1977-78 before going on to teach at Portland State University, Carlson is now a geology instructor with Mature Learning and is planning a trip for students to Mount Hood and Crater Lake.

A light lunch was served, followed by the presentation of the Mature Learning Volunteer of the Year Award to Dr. Cleo Pass for her 12 years of work with the Mature Learning program. Dr. Pass, who will be teaching a course at CTC on Sherlock Holmes in spring, said that the "overwhelming" award was a "thank you for doing something I thoroughly enjoy doing with the people I enjoy working with."

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley