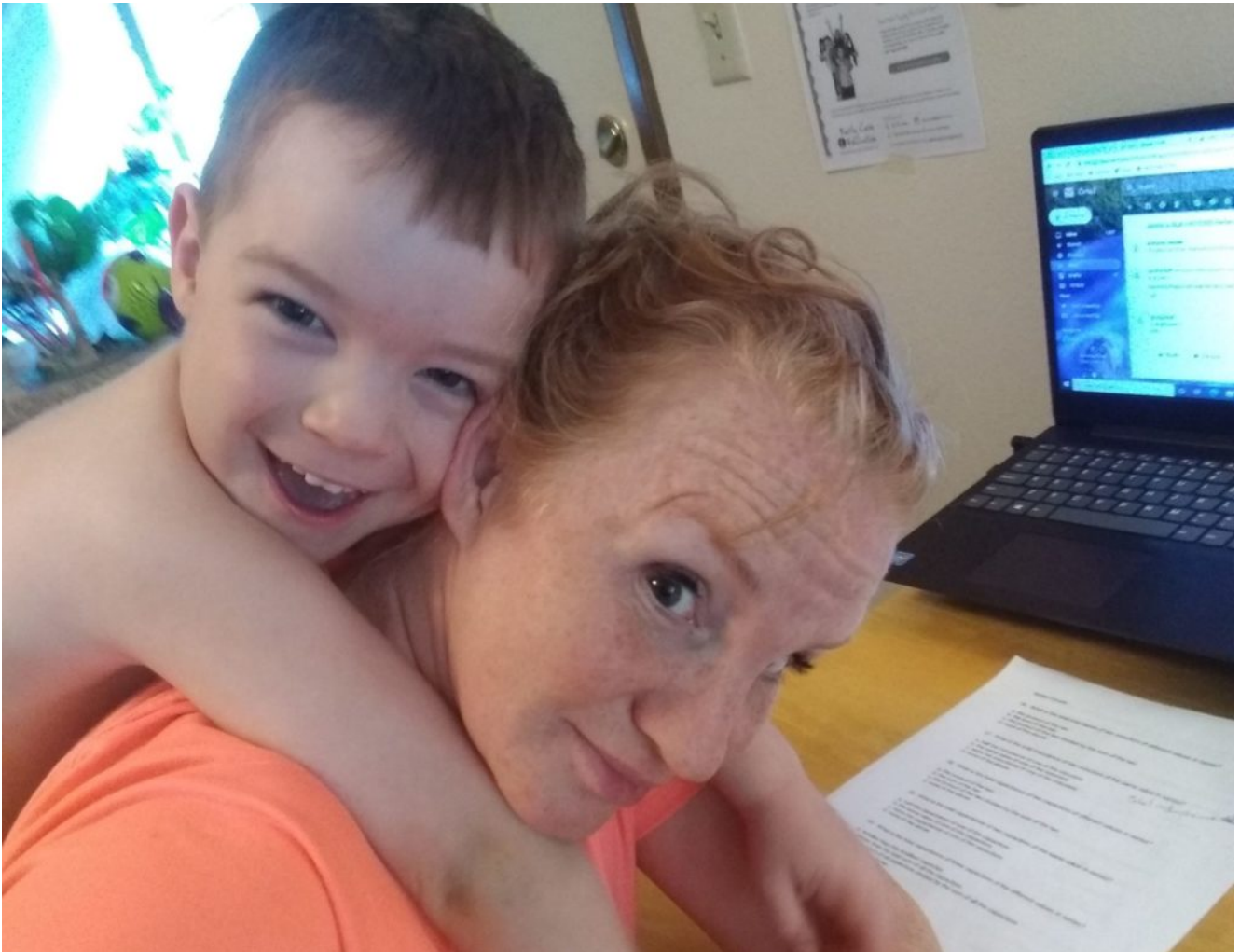


College and quarantine ... with kids



Jessica Bull has been juggling her online studies with caring for her young son. *Photo courtesy of Jessica Bull.*

Being a college student during the COVID-19 pandemic can be tricky enough, but it becomes exponentially more challenging when you're also taking care of young children whose school or child care facility has been closed or moved online.

About a quarter of Clark College students have dependent children. Many of these parent students have found themselves trying to manage their own studies while also serving as teacher's aide for their children.

Clark 24/7 interviewed some of these parent students to find out how they are coping. We also spoke with Michele Volk, director of the college's Child and Family Studies child care

center, which has remained open during the pandemic to serve parent students and their families. Their responses, edited for clarity and brevity, are in the links below.

Note: These interviews were conducted in late 2020, when public schools in the region were still operating remotely. In the time since, some schools have partially re-opened.

Child and Family Studies Q&A

- Michele Volk: Child care during COVID

Parent student profiles

- Jessica Bull: “Take extra care to reassure them.”
- Samantha Golden: “You can’t be 100 percent all the time.”
- Moses Kimeli: “Eventually, it’s getting easier.”
- Monserrat Soriano: “This is not the way it’s supposed to happen, but that’s all we got.”

Veterans Resource Center receives grant



The Veterans Resource Center at Clark College received a \$449,460 federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education to establish a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CEVSS) over three years. Clark is one of only two community colleges in the state to receive the grant. Focused on supporting veteran student success, the Center will provide a single point of contact to coordinate comprehensive, individualized support services that address the academic, financial, physical, and social needs of Clark College's 600 student-veterans.

Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Michele Cruse said, "We are grateful to receive grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education to support our Veterans Resource Center. This grant comes at a critical time when the needs of our military-connected students continue to outpace our available resources. This grant will allow our Veterans Resource Center to expand its offerings."

To better support student veterans, Clark College will establish a cross-departmental team with representatives from every office that works with student veterans, including

Admissions, Financial Aid, the Counseling and Health Center, and Career Services—to name just a few.

Additionally, the grant will pay for a full-time student success coach; half of a full-time program coordinator position; a part-time tutoring position; outreach and recruitment activities; disability accommodations such as Live Scribe pens; and essentials including housing and food supports for student veterans.

Associate Director of Veterans Services Dave Daly said, “Because of this grant, the Center will now have the ability to help today’s warriors not only to transition from the service, but also to be more successful in staying in school and completing their path in higher education. Our goal is for our student veterans to bring their deeper, world perspective not only to Clark College, but also as graduates who are productive, insightful members of the greater community.”

U.S. Senator Patty Murray announced the grant award from the U.S. Department of Education and called it a vital investment in Washington state’s veterans.

Senator Murray said, “I’m glad to see this federal award going towards helping veterans in Washington state as they pursue an education and I appreciate Clark College’s efforts to help those who have served our country. As a proud partner of our state’s veterans and educators, I will continue working to ensure they have the resources they need to succeed and thrive.”

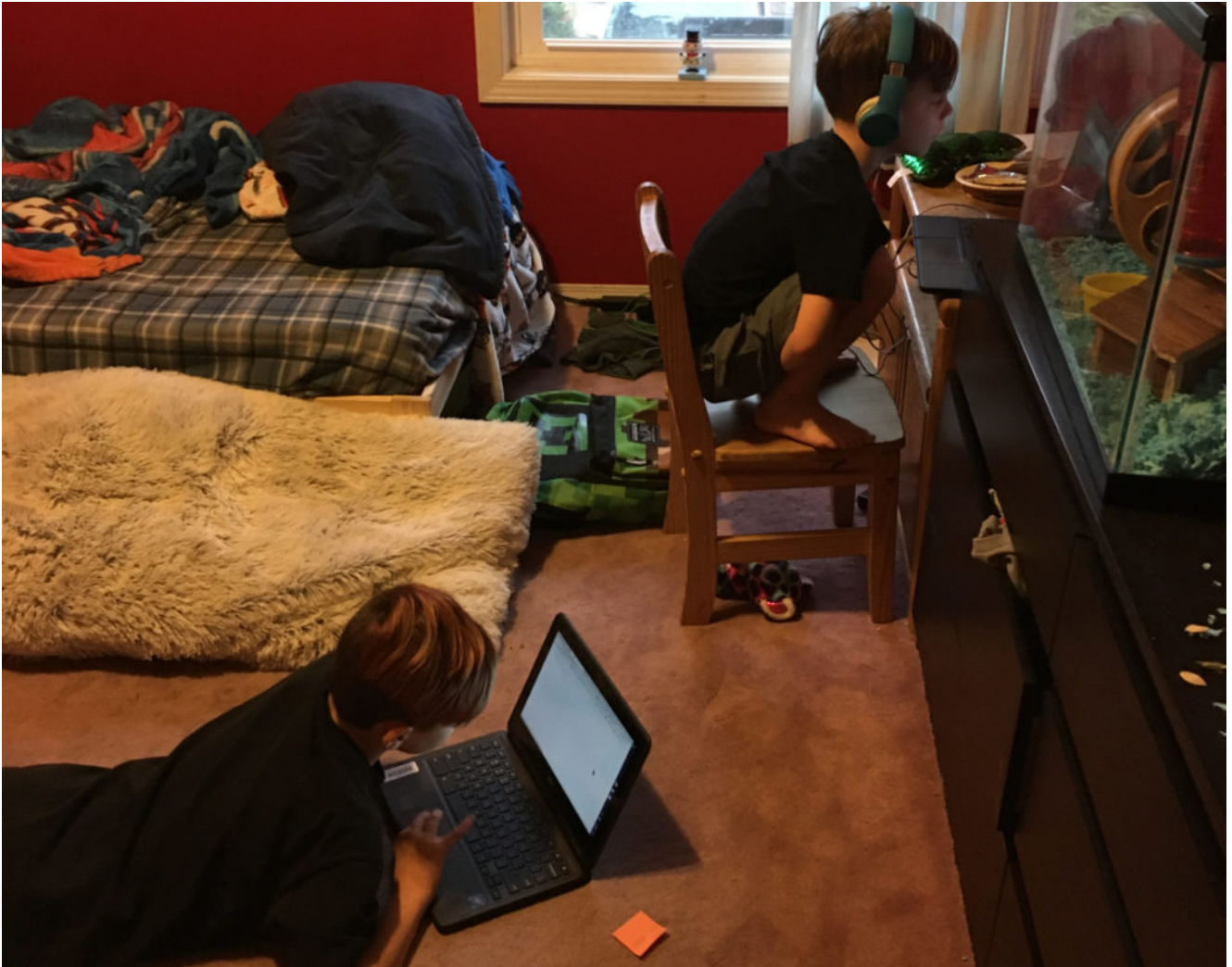
Senator Murray is the incoming chair of the Senate education committee, serves on the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, and is a steadfast advocate for veterans and their families.

About Clark College

Founded in 1933, Clark College provides residents of Southwest

Washington with affordable, high-quality academic and technical education. It is a public community college offering more than 100 degree and certificate programs, including bachelor's and associate degrees; professional certificates; high school diplomas and GED preparation; and non-credit community and continuing education. Clark serves a wide range of students including high school students, displaced workers, veterans, parents, non-native English speakers, and mature learners. Approximately three-quarters of its students are in the first generation of their families to attend college.

Student Parent Profile: Samantha Golden



Samantha Golden's sons have been attending online school while she studies in another room. *Photo courtesy of Samantha Golden.*

Nursing student Samantha Golden will receive her associate degree from Clark in June 2021, and then will transfer to WSU Vancouver to pursue her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. She attends Clark full-time and supervises her three children and their online learning. Owen is in sixth grade at Wy'East Middle School; Cal is in second grade at Riverview Elementary; and daughter, Elliot, 4, attends preschool at Clark College Child and Family Studies (CFS). During COVID, the two youngest attend CFS. Her husband works full-time.

This story is part of a series of interviews with Clark College student parents about how they are balancing school, life, and work, during quarantine.

Q: What are the challenges of all of you being at home for

months while also traversing online school?

SG: We're all here—together—all the time. I am not a teacher. I struggle with helping my kids learn these concepts that obviously seem easy to me. But I don't know how to teach them these concepts. We're all Zooming at the same time. Or I'm Zooming when they want to eat lunch. Some of my Zoom classes finish at 5 p.m., and then everyone is starved for dinner. It's tough.

Q: What are some logistics of all you working remotely at home?

SG: I usually work at the kitchen table. My kids each have a desk in their bedrooms, but if someone has a question and we're all in our own Zoom meetings, that question is not going to get answered. Or if someone has an assignment, but I have my own Zoom, it's hard to step away from my Zoom to be their home-school teacher.

Q: How are your children coping with doing school remotely?

SG: My sixth-grader, like many preteens, loves technology, loves being on the computer. But he is missing band and other extra-curricular activities. He's missed the transition from elementary to middle school. That's a milestone—but he'll get there one day. My second grader, on the other hand, really misses the social aspect of school—the interaction with other kids. Recess.

Q: How is your family faring without pre-COVID routines?

SG: We're all missing the routine of school, but we're building new ones. My two youngest children attend CFS Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The kids love it. We try to fit in routine as much as we possibly can, but also must be flexible too. With my nursing program, so much is up in the air. I must be flexible both as a parent and a student trying to traverse all of this.

Q: What is your advice to Clark students who are parenting young children?

SG: My best advice: Don't be so hard on yourself. This is an unprecedented time. Not only are you a parent, but also a homeschool parent and a college student. You're playing all these different roles that you didn't really choose for yourself. Give yourself credit and some slack. You can't be 100% in all these areas all the time. Maybe we're having cereal for dinner tonight. Maybe the living room is a mess. You think your kids are having an awful time, but my kids are loving this time at home. Yes, they miss their friends, but we're all together.

Q: What has been your biggest challenge through all of this?

SG: We've had so many days where things didn't go as planned. Now more than ever, you feel that you're failing as a parent. That's what hits me the most. It's not my Clark schoolwork, although that's very stressful. But I worry I'm not doing enough as a parent. Is my kid going to suffer later in school because I can't teach him long division or whatever the next thing is? I worry he's not learning anything. It's just cascading. The parent guilt is high, but the parent-teacher guilt is even more stressful.

Q: What kind of support would help Clark students who are parents?

SG: It would be nice to have a support group of students to share the reality of family life during COVID. A group to confess: "My kitchen is a disaster and we're having cereal for dinner. Anyone else?"

Student Parent Profile: Monserrat Soriano



Monserrat Soriano's daughter, Melody, says goodbye to her through the window at Clark College's Child & Family Studies. *Photo courtesy of Monserrat Soriano.*

Monserrat Soriano is a full-time Clark College student on track to complete the Administrative Assistant and Management program in Spring 2021. She's also a single mom to daughter, Melody, 7, in first grade at Martin Luther King Elementary; and son, Emmett, 4, who attends the college's Child and Family Studies child care program. During the COVID-19 pandemic, both kids have attended CFS so that Soriano can study at home. Soriano and her children live with her mother, uncle and brother, but none can help with childcare.

This story is part of a series of interviews with Clark College student parents about how they are balancing school, life, and work, during quarantine.

Q: How has CFS helped you focus on your schoolwork?

MS: After my daughter completes two hours of online school via Zoom each day, I take both kids to the childcare center at

Clark. Then I come home and do my schoolwork. I'm grateful that the state has paid for childcare during COVID. Fall quarter was the first quarter I've had childcare, because my daughter's previous childcare center shut down during COVID.

Q: How are your children coping with doing remote school at home?

MS: When we pick up my daughter's school work packets at King Elementary, she doesn't understand why she can't be in school with her teacher and other kids. She asked me why she is in daycare instead of school.

Q: What are some challenges you've faced during COVID?

MS: I'm a first-generation college student. Sometimes it feels like I'm breaking through walls. When I'm working at home, my family sees me struggling. My mom wants to help with the kids, but she's working two jobs. We all need compassion right now. And grace! When I'm home with my kids, I want to distract myself. I've been sober for almost a year. My testimony is of struggle. Clark needs students like me. I am resilient.

Before COVID, my degree was part of a teach-out program [a process in which a program that is being discontinued teaches the students who are part-way through the degree program]. Then because of COVID, our labs were removed. It adds so much anxiety and pressure. It's been hard to stay motivated. With COVID, I can't plan. I don't know what my next step is. Sometimes I feel that I can't make it. I come into the childcare center crying. I leave crying. That's how I'm coping. I'm going week by week with the kids.

Q: What's one particularly challenging story of taking remote classes while juggling parenting?

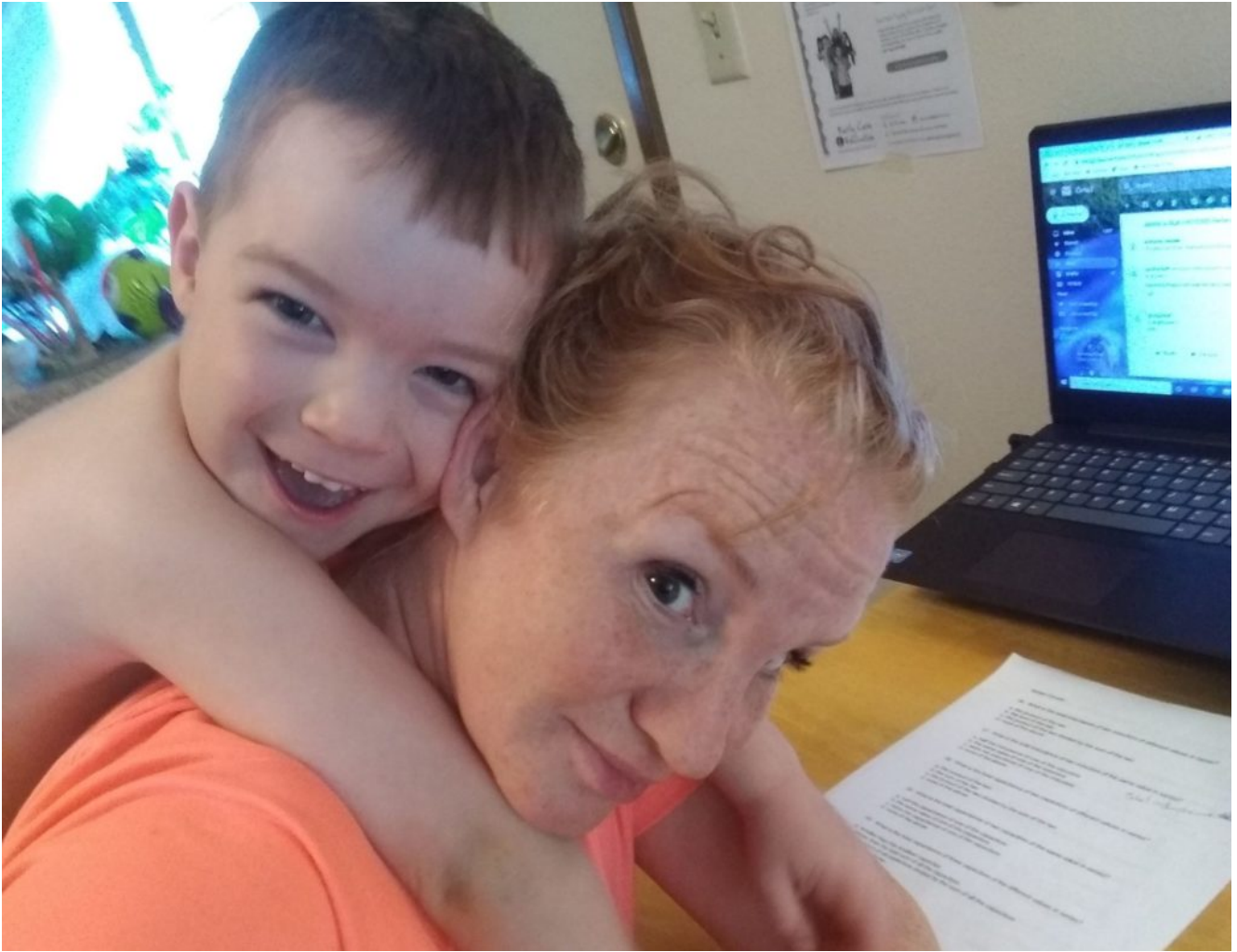
MS: Last quarter I thought I was going to give up. When I was taking my final via Zoom, my three-year old burst in and shouted, "I have to poop, Mom!" My instructor heard him and

gave me more time to complete my final. This is not the way it's supposed to happen, but that's all we got. We have to keep going. We have to keep our sanity.

Q: How are you coping?

MS: I attend Zoom counseling workshops with other parents, so I don't feel like I'm not alone. I learned to give myself some slack. Be gentle with myself as a parent. It's OK to cry in front of my children sometimes. This is not normal times. I'm trying to relax when I can, but I don't even know what that looks like.

Student Parent Profile:
Jessica Bull



Jessica Bull has been juggling her online studies with caring for her young son. *Photo courtesy of Jessica Bull.*

Jessica Bull is a Clark College student pursuing an Industrial Maintenance Technician degree. She works part-time at the college's Child and Family Studies (CFS) and she is full-time parent to her son, Eathin, 5, who is in kindergarten. During fall term, when her welding class ended at 9:20 p.m., Bull's partner stayed with her son. CFS doesn't offer evening childcare.

This story is part of a series of interviews with Clark College student parents about how they are balancing life, work, and school during quarantine.

Q: What is your family's involvement with Clark College Child and Family Studies?

JB: When I go to work at CFS, my son goes with me. I appreciate that the center schedules time to help kids with

their schoolwork. That relieves some pressure from helping him do his schoolwork at home.

Q: How are you and your son coping with COVID challenges?

JB: My son is awesome but being at home—instead of school—is hard for him to switch gears. I just started work again, and he started kindergarten. He’s been going to Clark’s childcare center since he was 1. We’ve had early-morning and late-night schedules. He’s adaptable.

Q: How have both you and your son adapted to online learning from home?

JB: This whole COVID thing has been rough. I’m not going to lie. I miss studying in Clark’s library. When I’m home, I like to spend time with my son, my family. That’s our leisure time. But now my son has schoolwork. I try to help him, but I’m Mom. It’s hard to get him to focus and to listen to me. It’s hard for parents to educate our kids because we’re not teachers. It’s tough.

Q: What’s your advice to fellow Clark students juggling your schoolwork, parenting young children and supervising their remote schoolwork?

JB: As much as you can, stay to the same routine. Kids like routine. Dinner’s at one time, bedtime is this time. Make a visual schedule to help them understand their day. Take extra care to reassure them. Get down to their level. Encourage them that it will be OK. Always. Because of the pandemic, we’re spending so much more time inside looking at screens. It’s not healthy for kids to have so much screen time.

Q: What’s your advice to Clark students who are parents of young children?

JB: Give yourself a break. Don’t be so hard on yourself. Try your best. Keep pushing forward.

Student Parent Profile: Moses Kimeli

Moses Kimeli is a full-time Clark College student majoring in Early Childhood Development and Education. He works 15 hours a week at Clark College Child & Family Studies. While he is at work, his wife supervises their children: son Ian, 7, second grade, and daughter Honest, 5, in kindergarten. Moses is supervising his children's remote learning.

This story is part of a series of interviews with Clark College student parents about how they are balancing school, life, and work, during quarantine.

Q: How have your children adapted to online school?

MK: They are new from Kenya and are still learning English and communications skills. After a month, they were able to log into Zoom by themselves and do their classes. Now I study while my kids Zoom, but if they have concerns, they ask me for help. My son says he is tired of Zoom classes. My children want to go to school to see their friends. But they are getting better at Zoom classes—and eventually, it's getting easier.

Q: What is your children's homework routine?

MK: I have them sit down with me and I am present to help them with their homework. I am completely engaged with them. I don't work on my own Clark College schoolwork during this time.

Q: When do you have time to study for your Clark College classes?

MK: Before COVID, I studied undisturbed from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. when my children were in school. Now I still study during that time, but I must keep my attention and my eyes on my kids. My strategy is I wake up at 5 a.m. and do my homework because when my children wake up, I focus on them. I study late at night when they are asleep.

Q: How has your family found balance doing online school? Do you worry about spending too much time on screens?

MK: At first, it was challenging, but now we have a system. Last spring after COVID restricted us to doing school at home, I realized my family's entire week was dominated by being online and looking at screens. So last fall, I scheduled a family break from screen time every weekend. By Friday at noon, we are all done with our homework. I collect everyone's tablet and put them away until Saturday night. No homework for anyone. No Zoom. Nothing to do with online stuff. We listen to music, play, go bike riding, cook, just be together. This way is better for the entire family.

Q: What's your advice to fellow Clark students who are parents of school-age children?

MK: Patience. Patience. Patience. If your kids can't figure out how to do something, have patience. Take it easy. Everything will come out.

Child care during COVID: An interview with Child & Family

Studies Director Michele Volk



Michele Volk

When COVID-19 restrictions moved learning online for all K-12 and college students in the state in March 2020, Clark's Child and Family Studies (CFS) kept its doors open to fill a vital role of providing childcare to families of essential workers and Clark students, as well as providing jobs for Clark students.

Clark 24/7 interviewed CFS Director Michele Volk to find out how her team has been safely serving families during the pandemic. "It's been a journey," she said. "We've received such positive feedback from our student families about the difference it makes having a community there for their children. ... By caring for the children of Clark students, CFS is equipping our students to do their own schoolwork and be successful."

Throughout the months of pandemic lockdown, CFS remained open—and welcomed school-age learners, too. It's been a learning process for all involved, as the edited interview below proves.

Q: Did CFS operate during spring term when pandemic

restrictions first were enacted?

MV: Yes. Throughout the pandemic we remained open for essential workers as defined by Washington State. We erred on the side of caution as guidance changed frequently.

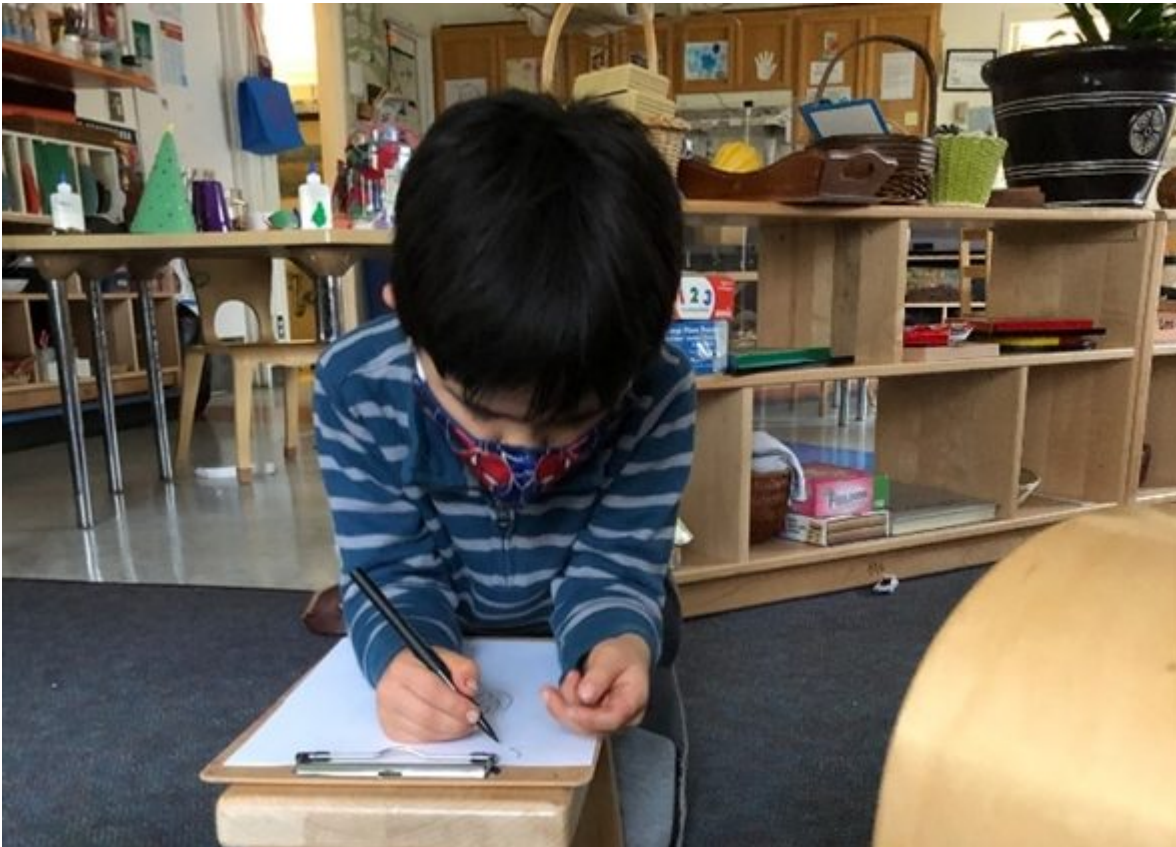
Q: How has CFS adapted to continue operating during COVID restrictions?

MV: CFS has adapted to COVID by continual monitoring of the recommendations, guidance and mandates of licensing, Washington Department of Health, CDC, Clark County, and Clark College. We are following safety protocols and best practices. Here are some of ways we adapted:

1. Added a school-age classroom fall term to accommodate Clark students whose children were at home doing school remotely
2. Decreased the total number of children in program
3. Reduced the number of classrooms in use from six to four
4. Decreased number of children in each classroom
5. Altered hours to stay within stable, consistent groups because we cannot combine groups of children or staff
6. Doubled the square-footage COVID social-distancing space recommendation for each environment
7. Implemented drop-off and pick-up procedures: eight-foot distancing between families, mask wearing, temperature taking, health screening questions, and hand washing
8. Installed Plexiglass barriers, including between larger tables in the school-age classroom
9. Masks: All staff wear masks within six feet of another adult; children age 5 and older wear masks in the classroom
10. Increased the frequency of sanitizing commonly touched items and spaces
11. Pre-COVID group projects have been adapted to

individualized sensory projects

12. Increased time children spend outside by extending outdoor teachers' schedule and going on more campus walks
13. Changed our typical self-service, family-style school meals to teachers serving children, using one-time serving utensils and dishware to limit our chef's exposure



Q: How many children are attending CFS during the pandemic?

MV: Pre-pandemic during fall quarter 2019, we had 128 children enrolled at CFS. In contrast, the 2020 numbers during the pandemic are a fraction of our earlier enrollment: summer break, 41 children; summer quarter, 47; fall quarter, 71; winter quarter, 69.

Q: What have been some of the biggest challenges of operating CFS during COVID?

MV: One challenge has been battling the emotional fatigue of the staff and families. Their stress levels have been high, yet they have continued to be present for the community. It's been difficult missing all in-person family gatherings, community meetings, and the in-person collaboration of a full program. It has been both challenging and touching to see how remote instruction has adapted for ECE lab and Family Life credit. People are finding unique ways to build relationships through Zoom, examining practices, videotaping and sharing of resources to meet outcomes. Despite the decreased enrollment and ratios, stable classroom groups and increased costs, we are committed to keeping everyone employed and engaged.

Q: What are some highlights—some uplifting, heartwarming moments at CFS during COVID?

MV: Hearing family stories has really touched my heart—knowing we have contributed to student retention and success. Having families grateful for our services so they can continue or return to work. Families have stopped by the front desk and expressed their gratitude for being able to either go to school or go to work to provide for their family during this time. Some have brought teachers and office staff flowers and treats.

Q: Are there any positive elements to the children's experience?

MV: It was heartwarming to see children coming back after time away—to see them reunite with their peers and teachers. Seeing children run to be together. School-age children have been reunited with their peers, with whom they attended toddlers' class or preschool.

With fewer children, it seems children are working longer on projects and working more together. The learning stories feel deeper, more connected. Teachers have more time to observe, document, and expand children's learning. Families have been

connected in these moments and connected us to home. This has become a very connected community.



Q: How has your staff stepped up to the plate throughout the pandemic?

MV: Our staff are the true heroes. Throughout the pandemic, they have been present to care for others, even as their own worlds are impacted. The way the teachers, office staff, and ECE faculty have respectfully altered their own lives, dug into deeper practice, meeting children and families where they are, the commitment and collaboration with one another and to safely keep children at the heart of their work—that's inspiring!

Q: How have Clark's CFS student employees made an impact during the pandemic?

MV: For many of those families, that part-time position at CFS also allows the family to have some stability financially. Those same student employees provide continuity for our children in our classroom. The sense of the routine and continuity for everyone in the community has been exceptional.

I believe these children are resilient because of the model of the adults—both their family members and staff—who surround them and keep those consistent routines. These adults revel in the joy with the children. That's made the difference.

Q: How many Clark students currently are employed at CFS?

MV: It has ranged each term between 19 and 25. We are currently hiring for several positions in both classroom and office, for those who have interest.

Q: How has the Clark community supported CFS through this challenging time?

MV: I so appreciate the larger Clark College community and their contributions to making this successful: Emergency Management Team; Facilities Services and the custodial team; Culinary and the treats for our staff and families; the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion's equitable decision-making and connecting students to one another; Communications and Marketing for supporting our communications to parents; Instruction and the creativity they have shown; Student Affairs' weekly tips and resources. So many more.

Q: Going forward, do you see some COVID precautions continuing with CFS?

MV: Yes. Post-COVID we will continue with hand-washing, increased sanitizing, and face masks will continue as long as guidance recommends. Pre-COVID we already were doing many of the recommended safety precautions, but we increased the frequency. After COVID we will continue having families wash their hands in the office before entering the program. We plan to continue the sanitizing of the office spaces and commonly touched areas. Clark's Facilities staff have been helpful and responsive. We appreciate them.

Q: Will CFS continue its school-age children classroom after public schools open their doors to in-person learning later

this month?

MV: Yes, we are working with families to make schedule changes to their CFS attendance days to meet their public school-schedule needs. We made a commitment to our children and families for the full school year. They have experienced so much change, and we are here as one of their few support systems.

Q: How do Clark students register to use CFS? Is there a waiting list? Are drop-ins welcome?

MV: We have limited spaces available. Families can check availability in their child's age group by emailing cfs@clark.edu or calling 360-992-2393. If we have no current availability, the family will be asked if they would want to complete an interest form. We prioritize our student families when placing new families. We do not have drop-in care available but operate on stable and consistent groups for best practice in early learning.

A welcome sign for Dreamers



Design by Mia Linnik

Digital Media Arts student Mia Linnik's winning design for a Dreamer-friendly logo

Being a college student can be stressful for anyone, but it carries an extra layer of anxiety for the undocumented. Will they be able to access financial aid? Will they be asked for a Social Security Number? Above all, will talking with a professor or staff member compromise their safety and lead to deportation?

Clark College is taking a new step to reassure these students: It is creating a new logo that faculty and staff can display to show that they are a "safe space" for undocumented students, commonly known as Dreamers.

The concept is much like the "Penguin Pride" sticker unrolled several years ago to indicate safe spaces for Clark's LGBTQIA+ students. As with that sticker, faculty and staff must undergo specific training before receiving the sticker—in this case, "Best Practices to Support Dreamers," offered by the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion.

The project is the result of a collaboration between Digital Media Arts students and BUILD (Broadening Understanding,

Intercultural Leadership and Development), a yearlong employee training program that focuses on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

After completing the inaugural BUILD cohort together, **Deena Godwin**, **Marilyn Hale** and **Yusufu Kamara** proposed creating a Dreamers logo for faculty and staff to display on windows, workspaces, or online to indicate safe spaces and community support for Clark College Dreamers. And who better to design such a thing than Clark College Digital Media Arts students?

Collaborating with Digital Media Arts department head **Kristl Plinz** and students enrolled in a beginning Digital Media Arts course fall term, the three BUILD members along with Diversity Outreach Manager **Rosalba Pitkin** helped define the client needs assessment, then participated in a student-led design pitch session via Zoom. After weeks of creative development, 24 student designs were submitted for consideration. A committee of 18 faculty, staff, and students—including Dreamers—voted on the designs.



Runner-up design by Jessica Peters

The winner, student **Mia Linnik**, was awarded a \$500 tuition scholarship provided by Clark College Foundation. Her design features monarch butterflies, which have become a symbol for Dreamers because of their long migration patterns.

Here is Linnik's description of her winning design: "This design incorporates the ideas of community, support and migration. The concept was to create a warm and uplifting

feeling with supportive hands and a group of flying monarchs. The Earth communicates the idea that Dreamers are from all over the world, and that we are still a community no matter where someone was born. The hands wrapped underneath the Earth conveys a message of support and care. The monarch butterflies are a symbol for migration. The group of butterflies shows community and togetherness.”

One Dreamer commented on the winning design: “It shows me again that Dreamers come from all different backgrounds and we don’t have a limit or where our dreams/goals can take us. We are resilient and determined to go anywhere our education goals take us.”

BUILD teammate and Economics professor **Yusufu Kumara** said of the winning design: “It takes me back to the first time I came to this country as a Fulbright Scholar in 2006. I met many others like me who came here from all over the world, and we were welcomed and embraced and made to feel like we belonged here by people who barely knew us. Looking at the winning design, I cannot hold back tears thinking back to those days, which considering what is going on now, seems like 100 years ago. I am filled with joy and very proud to have been a part of something bigger than myself. My wish is that this can carry over to other colleges and universities around the country. Let’s make this a national thing.”



Design by Sarah Bounds

Runner-up design by Sarah Bounds

Designs by students **Sarah Bounds** and **Jessica Peters** tied for

second place. Both students were awarded a \$75 credit to the Clark College Bookstore, also compliments of the Foundation.

It's hard to know how many Dreamer students attend Clark College; by necessity, they often keep their status hidden. This has been especially true in 2020, when the future of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initiative has been uncertain. However, the college has made a public commitment to not base admission decisions on immigration status and to not share students' immigration status with others unless required to do so by a subpoena or court order. Furthermore, Dreamers who live in Washington state have an added source of hope: While they are usually ineligible for federal financial aid, they may be eligible for state aid through the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA).

Learn More

- View the Zoom recording announcing the winning designs.
- View all 24 student design submissions.
- Learn more about how Clark College supports Dreamers at www.clark.edu/cc/dreamers.
- "*Best Practices to Support DREAMers*" will be offered February 8, 2021 from 4 to 6 p.m. via Zoom. Click to register here (must be a Clark College employee to attend).

Penguins feeding Penguins



Cuisine professor Earl Frederick, student Michael Scheidt, and Baking professor Alison Dolder help distribute food to Clark College students through the Penguin Pantry's monthly curbside pickup. *Clark College/Susan Parrish*

Since the global pandemic began, Penguin Pantry—the college's on-campus food bank for students—has doubled the amount of food it distributes monthly. It typically has distributed one box of shelf-stable food and a loaf of bread donated by community partners. Now Clark College is partnering with its own instructional programs to increase the food support it provides to students.

In October, Clark's Cuisine and Professional Baking programs began donating food made in their lab classes to Penguin Pantry. This new partnership is a win-win for everyone. Students and their families are receiving nutritious, from-scratch meals. Culinary students are getting hands-on experience at a time when the pandemic has closed the campus restaurant, food service, and bakery.

“We’re giving it away, since we still need the practice and our restaurant is still closed,” said Daryl Oest, Culinary support technician.

In the inaugural partnership event on October 27, Penguin Pantry distributed 108 food boxes to Clark students and their families during a seamless curbside pickup system in the Red Lot 3 roundabout. Each box contained a breakfast, lunch, and lasagna dinner.

Cuisine faculty member Robert Earl Frederick and his first-year students baked pans and pans of lasagna to provide 120 meals. Professional Baking department head Alison Dolder and baking students baked full-size pies. Additionally, students received a large box of nonperishable food and a loaf of bread.

Michael Scheidt, 20, a first-year cuisine student, maneuvered a wheeled cart laden with brown paper grocery bags containing a breakfast, lunch and dinner toward the curb outside Penguin Union Building.

“It feels really good to give back to the community,” he said. “We’ve all had hard times.”



Clark College Director of Student Life Sarah Gruhler gets ready to distribute food at a curbside pickup. *Clark College/Susan Parrish*

During remote operations, Penguin Pantry has set aside one day a month to distribute food boxes. Students sign up in advance to secure a time slot to pick up the food in the parking lot. Those with dietary restrictions can request vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, dairy-free, or pescatarian items.

A student who drove up to the curb was assisted by Sharon Toliver, Security & Safety Services; Samantha Lelo, Student Life Program Support Supervisor; and Lauren Boys, ASCC Civics and Sustainability Director. They checked the student's name against a list and loaded food into the trunk. Sarah Gruhler, Director of Student Life, supervised the distribution and ensured all ran smoothly.

Afterward Gruhler said, "The distribution went very smoothly. The students were so excited about the additional food. We've

already had 22 returning students sign up for November's distribution."

Frederick added, "We are all looking forward to continuing this partnership in the long run."

And in fact, while October's distribution event was impressive, it was just a dress rehearsal for the big event: Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving dinner

November's Penguin Pantry curbside distribution during Thanksgiving week will be a full, cooked Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings.

"We have plans for Thanksgiving to make sure our students are well taken care of during this tough time," said Oest.

Frederick anticipates roasting 20 turkeys to prepare 150 Thanksgiving meals for students and their families. Dolder says baking students will contribute pies—not only tradition pumpkin, but also apple, marionberry, cherry, and pecan—as well as dinner rolls and a morning treat.

Dolder estimates it will take her baking students two weeks of class hours to make individual pies to feed 150 people. The job will be broken down into smaller tasks: making and freezing the dough, making the pie filling, rolling out pie crusts, and shaping them into disposable pie tins. Eventually, the pies will be assembled, baked, and then frozen again. When students pick up their Thanksgiving food boxes, their pies—and the entire cooked Thanksgiving dinner—will be frozen.

"It's easier for us to serve frozen pies," Dolder says. "And we have a ton of freezer space."

Frederick adds, "It's safer to distribute frozen food."

With COVID, a greater need

Last spring, COVID prevented the on-campus Penguin Pantry from opening for walk-in visitors. Beginning in May, the Penguin Pantry began a monthly curbside food distribution following COVID safety protocols. In May, the pantry distributed 1,125 pounds of food to 165 people in 40 households.

As the pandemic has continued and many students and their families have lost their jobs in the subsequent recession, the number of students requesting food assistance continues to grow steadily. In September the pantry distributed 2,500 pounds to 305 students and their families. That's more than double the amount from May.

Month	People	Households	Pounds of Food
May	165	40	1125
June	177	38	1058
July	207	56	1430
August	263	79	1962
September	305	107	2568

As a partner with Clark County Food Bank, Penguin Pantry must carefully track its numbers and report them to the food bank.

The college has reached out to students to make sure students know about this resource—sharing information about it in online classes, on social media, and through a new text-message service the college has invested in.

“We’ve definitely seen an increase in the number of students requesting food,” says Gruhler. “Since we’ve been able to text students, there’s greater awareness of Penguin Pantry.”

Culinary school during COVID



Cuisine faculty and students prepare lasagne dinners to be given to students through the Penguin Pantry. *Clark College/Kelly Love*

Cuisine and baking students have continued their studies during the pandemic. They are able to meet in the kitchens for in-person lab classes using face coverings, social distancing, and daily temperature checks—all of which is becoming part of their career preparation. Their industry is changing rapidly because of COVID-19 restrictions.

“The industry will change,” said Oest. “We can’t see the crystal ball yet but whether it’s startups, more corporate food service, smaller restaurants, there will be food services moving forward. There will still be the need. These students have learned best safe practices for the post-COVID workplace.”

How to help

Penguin Pantry will distribute Thanksgiving dinner to students on Tuesday, November 24. If you'd like to donate toward Penguin Pantry, a \$30 donation will provide a family of four with a homemade Thanksgiving dinner and dessert.

Ways to donate and helpful links:

- Online: Give online with Clark College Foundation's online giving form and choose 'Penguin Pantry' from the drop-down menu under "Select an Area of Support." In the comments box, note "Thanksgiving dinner."
- By mail: Mail your check/money order to: Clark College, Attn: Cashier's Office (PUB 153), 1933 Ft. Vancouver Way. Make the check out to "Clark College" and write "Penguin Pantry" in the comments area.
- Via phone: Call 360-992-2571 on Tuesday or Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- Visit www.clark.edu/cc/penguin-pantry to learn more about how to donate to or receive support from the Penguin Pantry.

For welding, an almost seamless transition



A Welding Technologies student participates in an on-campus lab, even though most Clark College classes are being offered remotely during COVID-19. Fortunately, the program had already shifted to partially online classes before the pandemic hit, and students wear personal protective equipment as part of basic welding safety. *Clark College/Tarek Kanso*

When COVID-19 switched Clark College's spring quarter classes from on-campus to online learning, Welding Technologies students were ahead of the curve—and therefore were not as affected as other programs with hands-on labs. Instructor John Kuhn already had pivoted to the hybrid model of classes (part online and part in-person) via an online Canvas shell during summer 2019. At the time, it was a good way for students to complete the bookwork portion of their course. During COVID, it has allowed students to not fall too far behind, because they'd already been working online.

"We were pretty fortunate to have gotten started a year before with hybrid," says Kuhn. "It gave students an opportunity to study more in depth at home. We got a little deeper into theory, the bookwork, utilizing more YouTube welding videos. It proved effectively that they understood the information."



Even before the pandemic, welding students needed to suit up in personal protective equipment. *Clark College/Tarek Kanso*

Because safety is paramount, students in the Welding 102 introductory class must pass a welding safety test with 100 percent. In the past, some students had to retake the test in order to pass. Hybrid learning increased students' understanding of the material and translated into a higher percentage of students who didn't have to take the test a second time.

Welding students returned to campus labs in mid-June to complete their spring quarter practical welding assignments. Because Welding is a year-round program, the students returned for hands-on welding labs during summer quarter, too.

A program made for social distancing

Even before COVID, welding students already were wearing personal protective equipment and were socially distanced. Students suit up for every lab class: heavy, flame-retardant coat; steel-toed work boots with a metal plate added to protect feet; leather gloves; goggles; and a welding helmet with built-in face shield. Students work in individual welding booths, far removed from other students.

We visited the welding lab as six first-year students were finishing their class project: a flange, a small version of the pressure vessel built by second-year students. Pressure vessels are used to store and transfer liquids and gases under high pressure. Welding on pressure vessels must be exact and meet rigorous standards to withstand working conditions.

All the students we spoke with were eager to enter their chosen field. The outlook is promising: The number of welding jobs in Washington is projected to grow about 3 percent from 2019-2029, about average for all occupations, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In the Vancouver-Portland metro area, the average wage for a welder is \$23.98 per hour or \$49,887 annually. That's about \$8,000 higher than the median wage nationally.



Jessica Pellham. Clark College/Susan Parrish

Student story: Jessica Pellham

Jessica Pellham, 26, had no welding experience—and even lacked any experience with tools—when she started the Welding program in fall 2019.

“I kind of started out as a baby,” Pellham laughs. “I wanted to get into a trade. I tried machining. It wasn’t my thing.

Then I watched my fiancé's grandpa welding."

It intrigued her. She tried welding, and she discovered she had an aptitude for it.

Pellham says, "It's hard, physical work, but for me, it's so worth it to do something I love to do."

"She has excelled fantastically," says Kuhn.

Pellham works fulltime at a packing warehouse and goes to Clark fulltime, too. When her cohort began, she was one of three women. Now, a year later, she's the only woman left in her cohort, but there are more women in the second-year cohort.

"I'm hoping to see more women in trades," she says. "We can do it, too."

Pellham's eventual goal is to be hired on a union or government job.

She adds, "I'd love to weld on submarines or ships."



Jeff White. Clark College/Tarek Kanso

Student Story: Jeff White

At 60, Jeff White of Washougal is the oldest student in the cohort. Two years ago, he was laid off from his job as a boiler operator at Georgia Pacific in Camas, a job he'd held for 30 years. White qualified for the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program, a federal program to retrain displaced workers due to overseas competition. The program has paid for all his college expenses. He is living on unemployment while he attends Clark.

White's goal is a job in construction welding. He is a fourth-generation Washougal resident, and hopes he does not have to move to find work after he completes the program.

Student story: Ben Barton

Ben Barton, 29, has worked in restaurants since he was 16. A year ago, when he was working as a server at La Bottega in Uptown Village, he was considering making a career change when a co-worker told him about Clark's welding program.

"I was ready to do something that was stable," Barton says.

He researched the welding program and applied in summer 2019, but the fall cohort was full. There was so much interest that a second section was opened beginning winter 2020. He started the welding program full-time in January while he continued working at the restaurant 30 hours a week. Then COVID-19 closed restaurants in March, and he was laid off. To make up for the lost income, he applied for unemployment benefits.

"I'm thankful for unemployment," Barton says. "I'm going to school to further myself so hopefully I'll never have to be on unemployment again. Financially I've been okay. Obviously, you cut back your spending and you end up making your own meals again. Groceries are cheaper than eating out. My girlfriend

and I are both in the restaurant industry and are good cooks.”



Not only does the Clark College Welding Technologies lab offer hands-on experience with industrial equipment, it's well set up for social distancing. Most work stations are at least 6 feet apart. *Clark College/Tarek Kanso*

During spring quarter no hands-on labs were offered at Clark. Students kept up with their online bookwork, but they could not get into the labs to practice what they were learning.

“I was really thankful that Clark opened our shop back up for us,” he says. “The welders out there working in the industry are still working during COVID. I was at a stalemate. In limbo. I couldn't work. I couldn't do my welding [studies] to further my career.”

“I was one of the few COVID affected positively,” Barton says. “I was juggling school and working. Now I can focus on school.”

Visit www.clark.edu/cc/welding to learn more about the Welding Technologies program.