

# STEM groundbreaking draws a happy crowd



Clark student Audreyana Foster; Dena Horton, representing U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell; Vancouver Mayor Tim Leavitt; Clark County Commissioner Edward Barnes; Lisa Gibert, president/CEO of Clark College Foundation; and Clark President Bob Knight shovel the ceremonial dirt at the STEM building groundbreaking.

A burst of rain accompanied Clark's Pep Band as they played Pharrell Williams' "Happy" before a crowd of about 60 people on Tuesday afternoon during Clark College's official groundbreaking of its science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) building.

In speaking about why STEM education is critical to the region, Clark College President Bob Knight was joined

by Vancouver Mayor Tim Leavitt; Dena Horton, representing U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell; and Clark student Audreyana Foster.

“When completed, this project will continue to help us do what we have done for over 80 years: train and educate those who will lead Vancouver and the region forward,” said Knight during the September 30 event. “At more than 70,000 square feet, the facility will be the largest single classroom building on campus. The final investment in Clark will exceed \$41 million, between state funds and those provided by Clark College Foundation for equipment.”

Leavitt spoke about the economic advantages of having citizens trained for highly skilled and family-wage jobs such as in the STEM field. Cantwell’s message outlined the state’s commitment to education and jobs growth and her excitement about watching the building evolve over the next 20 months of construction.

Foster, a mechanical engineering student who began her studies at Clark when she was a teenager through Clark’s Running Start program, said the college’s faculty have opened up a new world for her.



Clark College’s pep band played through the rain during the STEM Building groundbreaking.

“I have learned how things function in the world outside of

the classroom,” she said. “And though not all of the lessons have been enjoyable, Clark College’s STEM program has provided me a safe learning environment that has helped me to learn in spite of my mistakes.”

Knight, Leavitt, Horton, and Foster were then joined by Clark College Foundation President/CEO Lisa Gibert and Clark County Commissioner Edward Barnes to shovel the ceremonial dirt of the groundbreaking. The sun shone through the cloud breaks, and cheers erupted from the crowd. Knight thanked the guests for their continued belief in Clark College and for all that they do to enrich the Southwest Washington community.

Construction is underway at the Fort Vancouver Way site and is expected to be completed in February 2016. Currently, the building is slated to open by the summer of 2016, according to college officials.

*A version of this article originally appeared on the Clark College Foundation website.*

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# **Icy                    Adventures                    in Microbiology**





Photo courtesy of Dr. Roberto Anitori

From one-celled organisms to imaginary elephants, we have much to learn from the non-human life forms around us. That is the theme of this year's season of Clark College's Faculty Speaker Series, "Microbes, Pets, and Puppets: What Animals Can Teach Us."

The series begins on October 30 at 4 p.m., when biology professor Dr. Roberto Anitori presents "Microbial Heroics in Antarctica" in the Ellis Dunn Community Room (Gaiser Hall room 213) on Clark College's main campus.

This presentation is a fascinating exploration of some rarely seen "extremophiles," microbes that have adapted to survive in places where most living things could not—in this case, the remote and lightless ice caves in an Antarctic volcano. Part travelogue, part scientific presentation, Dr. Anitori invites guests to voyage with him on his 2010 research expedition to

Mt. Erebus, the second-highest volcano in Antarctica. Through photos and stories, he will share his experiences training to survive in sub-zero temperatures, as well as his initial findings about the microbes living inside Mt. Erebus's caves—which could have implications for life in even more difficult-to-research regions, like the deep sea, areas far below the earth's crust, or even other planets.

"We think these ice caves are models for environments without light," says Dr. Anitori. "Most life on earth depends on sunlight."

Instead, these microbes survive on nutrients within the very rock itself—for example, digesting manganese and iron the way other organisms digest biological material. This discovery could, in turn, provide valuable insights into a little-understood aspect of Earth's ecology.

"Most people, when they think about microbes, they think about things that make you sick—or make yogurt or beer," says Dr. Anitori. "But 95 percent of the microbes on this planet don't have anything to do with those things."

This presentation is free and open to the public. Individuals who need accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event may contact Clark's Disability Support Services Office at 360-992-2314 or 360-991-0901 (video phone) or email [dss@clark.edu](mailto:dss@clark.edu) within one week of the event.

Future Faculty Speaker Series presentations include "Why Do We Need a Pet? Effects of animals on children's socio-emotional development" and "Bilingual Puppetry: a Project-Based Learning Exploration."

**About Dr. Roberto Anitori**



Dr. Roberto Anitori

Dr. Roberto Anitori has spent many years studying extremophiles and other microbes. After earning both his bachelor's and doctoral degrees in Molecular Biology and Microbiology from the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, he worked in research labs at Macquarie University in Sydney and at Oregon Health and Science University. In addition to his work in Antarctica, he has researched extremophiles in other volcanoes, deep-sea vents, underground water tables, deserts, and radioactive hot springs; he wrote the first published description of microbial life in the radioactive Paralana hot spring of Australia. He has been invited to lecture by organizations including the Australian Society for Microbiology, the Geological Society of Australia, and NASA. In 2011, he received the Antarctica Service Medal from the National Science Foundation. Dr. Anitori began teaching microbiology at Clark in 2008 and received a tenure-track faculty appointment in 2013. He is the editor of the book *Extremophiles: Microbiology and Biotechnology* (2012, Horizon Press).

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# Bright Talents, Dark Tales

Clark College will host award-winning authors Benjamin Percy and Wells Tower in two separate installments of the college's renowned Columbia Writers Series. Percy will read from his work and discuss his writing process on October 21; Tower, on November 3.

This is the first time the series will feature two separate events with different authors during the same quarter. "We've been really fortunate in that the Associated Students of Clark College have supported our efforts to expand this series," says CWS co-director Alexis Nelson, who teaches English at Clark. "Bringing two authors to campus on two different days (and at different times of day) will hopefully allow us to reach a wider audience. I know Clark students can have packed class schedules and often have work and family obligations on top of that, so this gives them more than just one chance to attend a reading this term."

As writers, Percy and Tower have some things in common. Both explore themes of the natural world, violence, fathers and sons, and men struggling with failure and redemption. Both have successful careers in magazine writing as well as in fiction (Percy is a contributing editor at *Esquire*, while Tower is a contributor to *GQ*). Each has two Pushcart Prizes and one Plimpton to his name.

But each writer has a very different voice and style. Tower is known for his depictions of gritty American realism; Percy is perhaps best-known for his most recent novel, *Red Moon*, which author John Irving called a "literary novel about lycanthropes [werewolves]" and which earned praise on Twitter from none other than horror great Stephen King himself.

"Both Percy and Tower are writing fun, energetic stuff and working in multiple genres," says Nelson. "Percy is a great

crossover author, someone who writes literary fiction yet can also attract a wider audience of readers interested in horror, fantasy, or suspense. And I love Tower's work for how funny and serious it can be at the same time, and for his exuberant and original use of language."

Benjamin Percy will read at 12:30 p.m. on October 21 in PUB 258C. Wells Tower will read at 2 p.m. on November 3, also in PUB 258C. Both events are free and open to the public.

### **About Benjamin Percy**



Benjamin Percy.  
Photo by Jennifer  
May.

Benjamin Percy is the author of two novels, *Red Moon*, an IndieNext pick and Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers selection, and *The Wilding*, winner of the Society of Midland Authors Award for Fiction; as well as two books of stories, *Refresh, Refresh* and *The Language of Elk*. Percy is currently adapting *Red Moon* as a series for FOX TV with Oscar-winner Akiva Goldsman (*A Beautiful Mind*, *I am Legend*, *Winter's Tale*) and *The Wilding* as a film with director Tanya Wexler (*Hysteria*). Percy's next novel, *The Dead Lands*, a post-apocalyptic reimagining of the Lewis and Clark saga, is forthcoming in April 2015 with Grand Central. He also has a craft book, *Thrill Me*, due out by Graywolf Press in 2016.



His fiction and nonfiction have been read on National Public Radio; performed at Symphony Space; and published by *Esquire*, *GQ*, *Time*, *Men's Journal*, *Outside*, the *Paris Review*, *Tin House*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Orion*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Ploughshares*, *Glimmer Train*, and many other magazines and journals. His honors include a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Whiting Award, the Plimpton Prize, two Pushcart Prizes, and inclusion in *Best American Short Stories* and *Best American Comics*. He writes for DC Comics, and his story "Refresh, Refresh" was adapted into a screenplay by filmmaker James Ponsoldt and a graphic novel by Eisner-nominated artist Danica Novgorodoff.

### **About Wells Tower**



Wells Tower.  
Photo courtesy of  
the author.

Wells Tower is the author of the short story collection *Everything Ravaged, Everything Burned*. His short stories and journalism have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *GQ*, *Harper's Magazine*, *McSweeney's*, *The Paris Review*, *The Anchor Book of New American Short Stories*, *The Washington Post Magazine*, and elsewhere. He received two Pushcart Prizes and the Plimpton Prize from *The Paris Review*. His magazine journalism has been shortlisted for the National Magazine Awards. He divides his time between Chapel Hill, North Carolina and Brooklyn, New

York.

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## Connect the Numbers on 9/30



The community is invited to help Clark College celebrate the successful completion of the “Ensuring a Bright Future” fundraising campaign on September 30 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Andersen Fountain on the main campus of Clark

College. The family-friendly celebration will include carnival-inspired games and food, as well as presentations by Clark students from a variety of academic fields and at least one big surprise.

When the Clark College Foundation launched the “Ensuring a Bright Future” campaign five years ago, it set its fundraising goal at \$20 million. As has been previously announced, that goal was surpassed—a remarkable feat at any time, but especially during one of the worst economic downturns within living memory, and a testament to the important role Clark College plays in supporting its community. During the September 30 celebration, attendees will learn exactly how much the campaign raised.

The “Ensuring a Bright Future” campaign was launched in 2010 by the Clark College Foundation with the goal of raising \$20 million to help support Clark College in key areas that had been identified by the college, the Clark College Foundation, and the community. The Clark College Foundation is the separate philanthropic arm of Clark College with the mission

of supporting student success and providing funds for program excellence at the college.

This event is free and open to the public. Andersen Fountain is located to the south of Gaiser Hall.

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## Changing Their Futures



Tyrene Weitz receives the Pat Fencil Scholarship during the 2014 GED/High School completion ceremony

Clark College celebrated its GED and High School Completion Ceremony on Saturday, June 21, capping off graduation week 2014 with a heartfelt ceremony featuring two student speakers and the conferring of certificates for GED or high school

completion on more than 60 graduates.



Peter Smith

After a welcome from President Bob Knight and a greeting from Board of Trustees Chair Royce Pollard, the microphone was handed over to two student speakers, Peter Smith and Tyrene Weitz. High school equivalency recipient Peter Smith started his comments by noting that the day had special meaning for him, as he was celebrating not only his degree, but also one year of sobriety.

Smith explained that a year ago, after finding himself in jail for a DUI, he decided the time had come to change his life. Earning his high school degree was the first step toward that; he plans to begin earning a certificate from Clark's welding program this summer as he continues his path toward a better life. "Hopefully, someday soon, someone like me will be standing here and my tax dollars will have helped him or her accomplish their goals," Smith said.

Smith thanked his girlfriend for her role in getting him to come to Clark, and noted that one of the things that many attending the ceremony had in common was support of family and loved ones. The O'Connell Sports Complex gymnasium was filled with balloons, flowers and the occasional noise-maker—proof of that support.

GED recipient Tyrene Weitz spoke next, saying that she had "given up" on school by the sixth grade and dropped out by the

ninth grade. She added that while she had always wanted to get more education, she kept putting it off after beginning a family at a young age. A year ago, she too took the first step. "I know college is not easy, but nothing worth doing is, and to succeed you need to do the best you can, right where you are, with what you have," she said.

Weitz has not only completed her GED, but she has also completed English 101 and is on her way to achieving her goal of becoming a registered nurse.

Weitz got a surprise boost toward that goal after she left the stage, when Dean of Basic Education, English, Communications & Humanities Deena Godwin announced that Weitz was the recipient of this year's Pat Fencl scholarship.



Named after a longtime Adult Basic Education instructor, the scholarship provides \$1,500 toward tuition to an ABE student transitioning to college-level classes at Clark.

The day was capped by Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs Tim Cook presenting the class to President Knight, who conferred the degrees on the graduates. After each student crossed the stage to receive their degrees, President Knight sent them out in the sunny day with words of encouragement: "Your time at Clark has provided you with new skills, new perspectives, and new confidence. These are powerful tools. As you take your next step, use those tools to build a bright future for yourselves and for our community."

See more photos from the ceremony on our Flickr page.

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*



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# #2014Clark: A Tale Told in Hashtags

Our favorite stories from Clark College's 2014 commencement ceremony, held June 19 at Sleep Country Amphitheater.

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## Under the Caps



Jaime Taylor and Susan Baker

Susan Baker and Jaime Taylor had to arrive at the Sleep

Country Amphitheater before 6 p.m. to get their spots near the head of the line of graduates waiting for the Clark College commencement ceremony's 7 p.m. start. But for both women, the wait for this moment was much longer than an hour.

"I started this journey in 1995," said Baker, who works as a teacher in the college's Child & Family Studies department. "And then I had children, and I had to put things on hold for a while, but now here I am!"

Taylor—who, like Baker, was graduating with honors with an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE)—told a similar story. "It was kind of my time," she explained about her choice to enroll at Clark, where she worked in Baker's classroom as part of her studies. "My kids had gone to school and it was time for me to do something for myself."



Judith Gomez

All along the line, there were tales of dreams deferred.

Judith Gomez—also among the ECE contingent at the head of the line—first began taking classes in Clark’s non-credit English as a Second Language program 16 years ago, soon after she moved to Vancouver from her native Mexico. At the time, she spoke no English, but she was determined to go to college. She had to drop out twice when she had children, but eventually she was able to improve her English skills to the point that she could take for-credit classes.

“English isn’t my first language, so for me, doing papers was double the work,” she said, beaming under her blue mortarboard cap, from which dangled the golden tassel and insignia of Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society for two-year colleges. “But I was determined, and my teachers were amazing, so supportive.”

Gomez, who also works in Child & Family Studies as an early-intervention specialist, said she hoped her children—ages 19, 14, and 10—would follow in her footsteps to pursue college educations. “In ECE, we call it ‘modeling,’” she said. “You model the right behavior, and the children see it and learn. My children are so excited already. They’re all talking about going to college.”

Kevin Ross was also hoping to being role model. “I am the first one from my whole family to graduate from college,” he said as he waited to receive his Associate in Applied Technology in degree in Supervisory Management. “We’re talking parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins. It feels good—it feels *great*. It gives my family members something to see. ... I have a little brother. I want to set an example for him, to show him that you can succeed, no matter where you come from or what’s happened in your life.”



Juliab Dutkel, Carlos Cervantes, Gregory Michael, and Kevin Ross

For Ross, life has not always been peaceful. He first started thinking about attending Clark when he was incarcerated at Larch Corrections Center. He got to know Clark College President Bob Knight, who regularly visits the center to play basketball with inmates. "As I approached my time to come out [of Larch], Bob started asking me, 'What are you going to do next? You should come to Clark,'" Ross recalled. "So I went to Clark. It's offered me an alternate route toward success."

Ross said he plans to transfer to WSU Vancouver to pursue a bachelor's degree in business. He will not be the first former inmate to do so—in fact, Clark College has long run an educational program within Larch, and on the Friday following commencement, a ceremony within the correctional facility's walls would celebrate the 34 inmates who earned their High School Equivalencies during this academic year.

Standing next to Kevin Ross was Carlos Cervantes, whose cap sat atop a long mane of curly gray hair. Cervantes came to Clark when the housing-market crash put an end to his career as a Realtor. He was graduating with a degree in Paralegal, despite having suffered financial hardships after losing his job.



“I was really struggling, but I got scholarships,” Cervantes said. “The Clark College Foundation made my education possible.”



Katie Brilz and Lacey Mac-Rhyann

For other graduates, this commencement wasn't a dream deferred—rather, it was a dream accelerated. Lacey Mac-Rhyann had decorated her cap with the slogan “17 with my AST.” Mac-Rhyann was one of the 235 graduates who participated in Running Start, a Washington State program that allows students to take college classes while still enrolled in high school. “It was the most phenomenal thing,” she said of the program. “It didn't just give me college credit—it gave me college experience.”

Ana Lai, who had decorated her cap with pictures of scientific equipment and the logo of University of Washington, also appreciated being part of Running Start. “It gave me a head start,” said the Ft. Vancouver High student, who plans to become a mechanical engineer. “I did the calculus and physics sequences, and I loved it.”





Ana Lai

Aleksander Thompson, who attended Evergreen High School, said he appreciated the serious atmosphere he experienced at Clark through Running Start. "In high school, you don't pay to get an education," he said. "In college, people are there because they want to learn."

Thompson was standing next to his friend Mark Hamilton, also a Running Start student from Evergreen, and who like Thompson plans on transferring to Portland State University's criminal justice program. Another thing the two young men had in common was that they originally chose Running Start in part because Clark's schedule offered them the flexibility to work full-time while attending school.

"You kind of cut out sleeping after a while," laughed Hamilton.



Timothy Witcher, Alecsander Thompson, Mark Hamilton, and English instructor Kate Scrivener.

As the bagpipes began to sound, the graduates quickly adjusted caps and gowns in preparation for their procession. This was the moment that would make all of it—the sleeplessness, the studying, the doubts and fears—worthwhile. Near the front of the line, Susan Baker got ready to complete the journey she'd begun almost 20 years earlier.

“You know, when you're a mom, you spend so much time telling your kids that you're proud of them,” she said. “It's pretty cool to be hearing my kids tell me they're proud of me.”

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley. More photos of graduates are available in the college's Flickr album.*

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# Congratulations, Class of 2014!



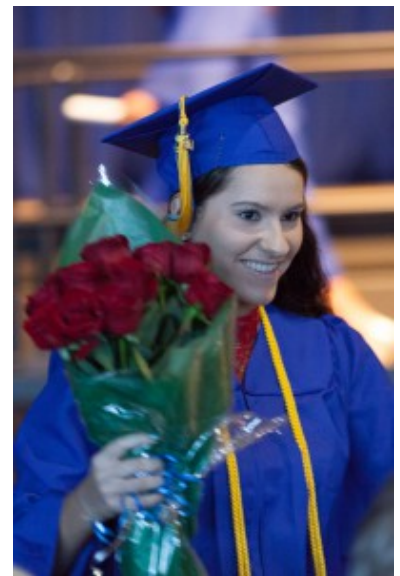
Student speaker Michelle Brincefield addresses her fellow graduates during the 2014 commencement ceremony.

Clark College honored its 78th graduating class—the largest in the college’s 80-year history—at the 2014 Clark College Commencement ceremony held Thursday evening, June 19, at the Sleep Country Amphitheater.

Approximately 2,100 degrees and certificates were conferred on the next generation of our community’s workers, leaders, and scholars—up from 1,900 the year before. Approximately 715 graduates participated in the commencement ceremony, including 235 Running Start graduates—again, a new record for the college, which has the largest Running Start program in the state.

“Tonight we are here to celebrate your individual accomplishment, and more than that, we are here to celebrate a community of accomplishment,” said Clark College President Robert K. Knight in his opening remarks to the Class of 2014. “Our community needs each and every one of you with your individual skills and talents.”

Clark College Board of Trustees Chair Royce Pollard echoed that thought in his own remarks, saying “We know our future is in good hands with you, just as our community has been in good hands with Clark College alumni for eight decades now.” The former Vancouver mayor then asked the graduates to raise their right hands and repeat the following pledge: “I will never forget that I am a member of the Penguin Nation.”



Presidential Scholarship recipient Natasha Hambrook takes her seat after receiving her diploma.

For the second year in a row, the ceremony’s student speaker was chosen through an essay contest open to all 2014

graduates. Outgoing ASCC president Dena Brill introduced Michelle Brincefield, who entered Clark through Running Start and is planning on attending New Mexico Highlands University on a full athletic scholarship.

“Wherever life takes you after today, you can always take pride in knowing that you have a college degree,” Brincefield said. “No one can take that accomplishment away from you.”

During the ceremony, Clark College President Robert K. Knight announced the names of the recipients of the 2014 Exceptional Faculty Awards. The 2014 awardees are Kelly Fielding, instructor of psychology; Chris Martin, instructor of computer technology and computer graphics technology; Sarah Theberge, professor of early childhood education; and Jim Wilkins-Luton, professor of English.

Knight also announced the recipient of the 2014-2015 Community College President’s Award, which is given to a Clark College graduate who is transferring to a WSU Vancouver degree program and who demonstrated leadership potential, a commitment to community service, and academic achievement. Natasha Hambrook will receive full-time tuition that is renewable for one additional year.

This year’s commencement speaker was *ABC Evening News* anchor Byron Pitts, who delivered an inspiring speech about the importance of helping others. Pitts began by explaining his own difficult beginnings with education: Until age 12, he was functionally illiterate, and it took the unflagging support of his single mother to help push him toward academic success.





2014 commencement  
keynote speaker  
Byron Pitts

Pitts said that while some of that night's graduating class may have had an easy time earning their degrees, he suspected many had had rough roads to travel. "I imagine there are some graduates here tonight who heard too often, 'Not you, now now, not yet. You're not good enough. You're not ready,'" he said, adding that he called such graduates "Children of the Storm."

"To you, the Children of the Storm—to you for whom this night was not guaranteed—you especially have a responsibility, I think, to allow somebody else to live their dream," he said. "Whether it's in nursing or as a machinist or going on to continue your education—whatever it is, in that space where you stand, make life better for someone else."

Pitts received a standing ovation, and it was clear that many attendees found his message inspiring, as posts on social media soon showed.

*Photos and Video: Clark College/Jenny Shadley.*

*Watch the entire ceremony on CTVV.*

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## **A Night to Celebrate**



Natasha Hambrook, recipient of the Community College President's Scholarship, receives her diploma from President Robert K. Knight at Thursday's commencement ceremony.

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year before. Approximately 715 graduates participated in the commencement ceremony, including 235 Running Start graduates—again, a new record for the college, which has the largest Running Start program in the state.



Lines rapped around the amphitheater as the number of students participating in commencement reached an all time high. Linda Calvert, Associate Director of Running Start, escorted Oswald through the crowd.

During the ceremony, Clark College President Robert K. Knight announced the names of the recipients of the 2014 Exceptional Faculty Awards. The 2014 awardees are Kelly Fielding, instructor of psychology; Chris Martin, instructor of computer technology and computer graphics technology; Sarah Theberge, professor of early childhood education; and Jim Wilkins-Luton, professor of English.

Graduate Natasha Hambrook was the recipient of the 2014-2015 Community College President's Award. The annual scholarship is given to a Clark College graduate who is transferring to a WSU Vancouver degree program and who demonstrated leadership potential, a commitment to community service, and academic achievement. The scholarship award provides full-time tuition and is renewable for one additional year, essentially

providing full tuition to complete a bachelor's degree.

Hambrook, who lives in Vancouver with her family and will turn 18 in July, came to Clark through Washington State's Running Start program, which allows high school students to earn college credit while still enrolled in high school. While at Clark, she maintained a 3.98 grade point average while taking classes in Clark's challenging biology and chemistry sequences and contributing more than 15 hours a week in volunteer work. Some of that work was through her personal commitment to the Southwest Washington Humane Society, where she helps care for cats and trains other teen volunteers; Hambrook has also served as the Student Volunteer Coordinator for Clark's Service and Leadership in the Community (SLIC) program. In that role, she has organized groups of students on volunteer trips to organizations like Habitat for Humanity and Clark County Food Bank, as well as a beach-cleaning trip to Cape Disappointment State Park.



Hambrook says her commitment to community service comes both from a love of helping others and from her own family's experiences. "My family has received help from the food bank in the past, so I know there's a need for community service," she says. Like 73 percent of Clark's student body, Natasha Hambrook is a first-generation college graduate. She plans to study medicine and become a pediatric surgeon. "It feels so amazing to have won this scholarship," Hambrook said after President Knight's announcement at commencement. "I am so grateful I had the opportunity to participate in Running Start, because Clark helped shape me into the woman I am

today." This year's commencement speaker was *ABC Evening News* anchor Byron Pitts, who delivered an inspiring speech about the importance of helping others.

*Read more stories from Clark's commencement on Clark 24/7 early next week.*

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley. More photos from Clark's commencement ceremony are available on the college's Flickr site.*

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## Photo Album: Spring Thing

Ah, life in the Pacific Northwest! After a month of unseasonably sunny days, the Friday of Spring Thing featured rain and clouds. But like true Northwesterners, the Penguin Nation was undaunted by a little "liquid sunshine" pouring down on the annual event that celebrates the end of the academic year and the countdown to Commencement for our graduating students. Celebrants enjoyed free food and treats, inflatable obstacle courses, games, a climbing wall, and numerous other activities organized and provided by the Associated Students of Clark College. Here are a few scenes from a fun-filled day.

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*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*