

A Night of Celebration



Almost 740 graduates attended the 2015 Clark College Commencement ceremony, held June 18 at the Clark County Event Center.

The sun shone, the bagpipes sounded, and the members of Clark College's 79th graduating class gathered together—more than 730 of them, making the 2015 Commencement ceremony the college's largest yet.

The Clark County Event Center was filled with friends, family members, and other well-wishers at the event, which took place during the evening of June 18.



First-generation college graduate David Scott '15 attended the 2015 Commencement ceremony.

Approximately 20 members of the crowd were there to cheer on David Scott, 22, who was receiving his Associate of Arts degree. "I'm the first one in my family to graduate from college," said Scott, whose neck was adorned with multiple leis, a traditional Hawaiian token of celebration. "They're pretty stoked."

Scott, who is transferring to Washington State University Vancouver in the fall and hopes to become an elementary school teacher, said he was impressed by the caring nature of his professors at Clark. "They genuinely want you to be successful," he said as he waited in line to enter the ceremony.

Scott said he also appreciated the flexibility of Clark's online courses. "I've been working fulltime as an overnight stocker at Winco Foods," he explained. "It's really good that they have online classes because I get off work at 7:30 a.m. and need to sleep."

In total, some 2,000 degrees and certificates were conferred upon the Class of 2015. This year's graduating class included 278 Running Start graduates—a new record for the college,

which has the largest Running Start program in the state.



“We got here at 4:45 to line up,” say these Running Start students from Woodland High School, including N.E.R.D. Girls president and Clark Aeronautics Club member Adeline Dinehart, *third from left*.

Adeline Dinehart stood with five friends at the head of the line of graduates. All six young women were Woodland High School students who had attended Clark through Running Start. Dinehart had thrived at Clark, where she became president of the popular N.E.R.D. (Not Even Remotely Dorky) Girls Club and a member of the Clark Aeronautics Club, which successfully participated in a NASA rocketry competition in Huntsville, Alabama, this spring.

“We were the only community college in the maxi competition,” she said proudly. “The atmosphere there was great—really competitive, but also really encouraging of one another.”

Dinehart said she appreciated the faculty’s promotion of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, citing engineering professors Carol Hsu and Tina Barsotti in particular. “Tina and Carol are amazing,” she said. “They have taught me so much over the past two years.”

Dinehart will be attending University of Washington in the fall. Two of her friends, Jamie Kitchen and Shianne Burhop, are also college-bound, but headed to George Fox University, where they will be roommates.

"The credits from Clark transfer really well," said Kitchen. "That's part of why I chose to come to Clark."

"Going to Woodland, you have the choice as a Running Start student between Lower Columbia College and Clark," explained Burhop, who had adorned her cap with the Bilbo Baggins quote, "I think I am quite ready for another adventure."

This year's ceremony saw an explosion in cap decoration, and as students filed into the ceremony, the westering sun glinted off of messages outlined in glitter and rhinestones.



Outgoing ASCC President Emmah Ferguson addressed the Class of 2015 at Commencement. Both her siblings also attended Clark through Running Start; Ruth graduated from the University of Washington the week before Clark's Commencement and Zachary is entering Duke Law School on a full scholarship in the fall.

The ceremony itself held many highlights. Student speaker and ASCC president Emmah Ferguson shared how Clark had developed

an unrealized love of science within her.

“We have all had obstacles,” she said. “For me, my biggest obstacle was probably myself and my ideas about what I could and couldn’t do. ... It is our resilience and persistence that has gotten us this far, and it will take us where we want to go next.”



Curt Warner, *left*, thanks Clark College President Robert K. Knight before giving the 2015 Commencement keynote address.

Former Seattle Seahawks running back and businessman Curt Warner gave the keynote address. Noting that he had grown up in West Virginia’s coal mining country, where career options were limited, he urged graduates to aspire toward their goals, even if others tried to dissuade them.

“If people say you can’t succeed, you don’t have time to listen to that,” he said. “Dedicate yourselves to your goals. Never give up. People who make goals get slapped down at least once. Everyone loses sometime. It’s how you handle the losing that makes you a winner.”

The ceremony also served as the announcement of the 2015 Exceptional Faculty Awards. The 2015 awardees are Steven Clark, professor of biology; Alison Dolder, instructor of baking; Matthew Gallaher, instructor of English; and Michiyo

Okuhara, professor of Japanese. President Robert K. Knight also announced the recipient of the 2015-2016 Community College President's Award, Kathleen Fockler.



High school diploma recipient Leeann Hodge addressed the 2015 Commencement. This was the first time in many years that high school diploma and GED recipients participated in Commencement.

New this year, students who earned GEDs or High School Diplomas through the college's Transitional Studies program were invited to participate in the ceremony. Approximately 25 of these students participated in the ceremony, and High School Diploma recipient Leeann Hodge was one of two student speakers to address the crowd.



Transitional Studies

graduates Chris Boots, Devon Zach, and Amanda Halbert wait in line to participate in the 2015 Commencement ceremony.

Before the ceremony began, these students had stood in a line adjacent to the line for associate degree and certificate recipients. One of them, Amanda Halbert, said she decided to pursue her GED once her youngest child was getting ready to start kindergarten. She is beginning college-level classes at Clark now, with the goal of earning a degree in graphic design.

"It's a little nerve-wracking, looking across at the people in that line, getting their associate degrees," she admitted. "But I'm proud of myself for being here. And I know I'll be in that line one day."

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

To see more photos from Commencement, visit Clark's Flickr album.

Curt Warner to Speak at Commencement



Former football star Curt Warner is Clark College's 2015 Commencement keynote speaker.

Photo courtesy of Curt Warner.

Legendary football star and local businessman Curt Warner will be sharing his inspiring message with the Clark College Class of 2015 as the college's Commencement keynote speaker.

This year's ceremony is scheduled to take place at 7 p.m. on Thursday, June 18, at the Clark County Event Center. The event is open to the public and tickets are not required.

About Curt Warner

In the course of his life, Curt Warner has used his talent and drive to succeed as both an athlete and a businessman.

Warner grew up in rural West Virginia, graduating from a high school class of just 90 students. A talented running back even then, he earned a football athletic scholarship to Penn State University, where he was named an All-American in both 1981 and 1982. In 1983, he helped the Nittany Lions capture their first national championship. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in

speech communication from Penn State.

After college, Warner was drafted by the Seattle Seahawks in the first round. He led the American Football Conference in rushing yards his rookie season, helping his team get to the AFC's first conference championship game. Warner was named to the NFL's Pro Bowl in 1983, 1986, and 1987. He was inducted into the Seattle Seahawks Ring of Honor in 1994, and into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2009.

Warner retired from football in 1990 and opened his own car dealership, Curt Warner Chevrolet, in 1999. He closed the business in 2010. Beyond his current professional activities Warner serves as a motivational speaker for companies and institutions.

Warner lives in Camas with his wife, Ana; their twins, Austin and Christian; and daughter, Isabella. Their oldest son, Jonathan, is currently a wide receiver at Penn State.

Clark College Honors Memorial Day



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Clark College's Veterans Resource Center is honoring Memorial Day by commemorating veterans who have given their lives in service to their country on Tuesday, May 19 at 2:00 p.m. in the Penguin Union Building room 161 on the college's main campus. (The college is closed on Memorial Day.) Dr. Samantha Powers will be the featured guest speaker at the event, which is free and open to the public. The colors will be presented and light refreshments will be served.

Dr. Powers is the Project Director and a trainer for the Veterans Training Support Center of the Center for Learning Connections, Edmonds Community College. She is a veteran of the United States Air Force Special Operations. A combat veteran who served in Kuwait, Afghanistan, and Iraq during Operation Enduring Freedom, Dr. Powers volunteers for a number of veterans organizations in Washington State as a member and officer. She is an adjunct instructor at various higher education institutions in Organizational Leadership and Emergency Management programs. Dr. Powers holds a B.A. in Military History from Virginia Tech, an M.A. in International Relations from University of Oklahoma, and a Ph.D. in

Educational Leadership from Old Dominion University.

Clark College serves more than 400 veterans each year. The Veterans Resource Center provides services to those students, helping them navigate everything from their G.I. Bill benefits to helping them find textbook and other resources.

Clark College's main campus is located at 1933 Ft. Vancouver Way in Vancouver, Wash. Directions and maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps. Individuals who need accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College's Disability Support Services (DSS) Office at 360-992-2314 or 360-991-0901 (VP). The DSS office is located in room 013 in Clark's Penguin Union Building.

“Subtext” Grows



Students at the 2014 *Phoenix* unveiling, part of the 2014 Subtext literary festival, unwrap the new issue. This year, Subtext has expanded to a full week of events.

This year, the Clark College Columbia Writers Series is expanding its popular Subtext literary festival to offer a full week of writers, readings, and events on the college's main campus. From May 18 – 22, the college will host internationally celebrated authors, as well as readings by Clark students, faculty, and staff. (See full schedule below.)

“It has always been our goal to create a true festival feeling, with multiple events throughout the week,” said Columbia Writers Series Co-Director and English faculty member Alexis Nelson. “This is the festival’s third year, and we’ve tried to expand it bit by bit each year. Last year we were able to bring Pulitzer Prize-nominated novelist Karen Russell for the main event. This year, we want to build on that excitement with more events, more voices, more diversity. I hope in time that Subtext will be something that our whole

community, both within and without the college, looks forward to each year.”

All events are free and open to the public. Directions and maps are available online. Individuals who need accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College’s Disability Support Services (DSS) Office at 360-992-2314 or 360-991-0901 (VP). The DSS office is located in room 013 in Clark’s Penguin Union Building.

The Columbia Writers Series was launched at Clark College in 1988, bringing local, national and international authors to the college and the region. Information about the Columbia Writers Series is available at www.clark.edu/cc/cws.

Schedule

May 18

10 a.m. – noon, PUB 161: *Artists and Authors panel: “The Craft of Comics”*

A panel of successful writers for comic books discuss the challenges and joys of their field.

May 19

11 a.m. – noon, PUB 258C: *Reading: fiction writer Nam Le*

Born in Vietnam and raised in Australia, Nam Le’s first book, *The Boat*, earned recognition that includes the Pushcart Prize, the Melbourne Prize for Literature, the best debut of 2008 by both *New York Magazine* and *The Australian Book Review*, and a *New York Times* notable book. It has been translated into 14 languages. Le is the fiction editor of the *Harvard Review*.

May 20

11 a.m. – noon, PUB 258B: *Reading: poet Mary Szybist*

Mary Szybist is most recently the author of *Incarnadine*, winner of the 2013 National Book Award for Poetry. She is the recipient of fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rona Jaffe Foundation, and the Witter Bynner Foundation in conjunction with the Library of Congress.

May 21

3 p.m. – 4 p.m., PUB 161: *Phoenix release party*

Clark College's national award-winning art and literary journal, *Phoenix*, will unveil its 2014-2015 edition with readings from student authors and free copies available for guests.

5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m., PUB161: *Talk by writer Karen Karbo and English Department awards ceremony*

Karen Karbo is the author of four *New York Times* Notable Books, including her first novel, *Trespassers Welcome Here*, as well as her memoir about her father's last year of life, *The Stuff of Life*. She is well known for her international best-selling Kick Ass Women series, which examines the lives of iconic 20th century women. In addition, she writes the Minerva Clark mystery series for children.

May 22

Noon – 1 p.m., PUB 258C: "Clark Crossings," a student and faculty reading.

This year's theme is "Transport."

When Puppets Do the Talking



Spanish professor Elizabeth Ubiergo sits with the puppets she helped create during her 2014 sabbatical project.

On Tuesday, May 12, at 4:00 p.m. in the Ellis Dunn Community Room (Gaiser Hall room 213), the Teaching and Learning Center hosts “Bilingual Puppetry: A project-based learning exploration,” the 2014 spring quarter installment of Clark College’s Faculty Speaker Series. Professor Elizabeth Ubiergo will present her sabbatical research on the use of puppetry and other forms of art and literature to enhance learning world languages.

Ubiergo’s research was prompted by realizing that her young daughter spoke better Spanish when talking with a toy than

when talking with real human beings. She began wondering if this same technique could help her students at Clark, who often seemed to forget their Spanish language skills as soon as they had to use them in front of other people.

“There is a lot of research going on right now regarding performance-based language learning,” says Ubiergo. “I thought, maybe if my students had something to hide behind, like a large puppet, they could relax and get more from the experience.”

Ubiergo used her sabbatical to learn performance-based teaching techniques, build a series of large puppets based on classic works of Spanish literature, and create bilingual scripts for short plays to be performed with the puppets. After her sabbatical, she worked with students to perform the plays at the college’s annual Día del Niño/Latino Festival and in the classroom. They will also perform at the Portland Puppet Museum during the 2015 summer quarter.

While Ubiergo’s work is focused on the teaching of Spanish, her presentation will provide insight and advice to any teacher interested in exploring performance- and play-based teaching techniques.

About Elizabeth Ubiergo

Spanish professor Elizabeth Ubiergo has earned a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts degree in Spanish language and literature from the University of Oregon. She also attended Universidad de Valladolid, Spain, and the Universidad Católica in Quito, Ecuador. Ubiergo has previous work experience with the University of Portland, Portland Community College, Chapman & Silva Translation Services, Universidad Católica–Ecuador, University of Oregon, and Clark College. She began teaching at Clark in 1994 and received tenure in 2008.

At Clark College, Ubiergo serves as co-advisor of the Spanish Club. She is the founder of Clark’s study abroad program in

Valladolid, Spain, and this year began co-leading Clark students in a newly designed, two-week course of study in Mexico. She is the founder of the Mesa Redonda, a series of Spanish-language roundtable discussion groups which have been held at Clark for 13 years. She also served on Clark's Financial Aid Committee, International Education Committee, and Latino Celebration Month Planning Committee. In addition, for more than a decade Ubiergo has served as an Advance Placement (AP) exam reader for the AP test in Spanish.

Ubiergo says her teaching philosophy emphasizes the importance of play in the learning process. "I tell my students that language learning should be fun and creative, not competitive and stressful," she says. "Basically, students learn by speaking and making mistakes in authentic situations."

About the Faculty Speaker Series

The Clark College Faculty Speaker Series showcases recent experiences that have enriched both the life and teaching of a Clark faculty member. Faculty members share their developmental experiences with the college community—and members of the community at large—while addressing some of today's most intriguing issues.

Established by Clark College with support from the Clark College Foundation, the series honors individual faculty members and celebrates academic excellence.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Sand Mandala event at Clark College postponed



Tibetan monks making a sacred sand mandala in Cannell Library during their 2012 visit.

The construction of a Sand Mandala at Clark College's Cannell Library, scheduled for May 4 – May 8, has been postponed until further notice.

The monks of Drepung Loseling Phukhang Monastery are experiencing an extended delay in obtaining the travel documents required to leave India and come to the United States, making it impossible for them to be in Vancouver in time to begin construction on the Mandala on May 4.

At this point, it is possible that the Mandala event will be either cancelled or postponed to a different date in May or June. Clark College will issue a news release if the event is

rescheduled to share the new dates and times.

Clark College regrets the inconvenience this may cause visitors who were planning to attend the Mandala event.

Fun for the Whole Familia



Members of the Olincalli Ballet Folklórico perform at the 2014 Latino Festival.

On Friday, May 1, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., Clark College invites the community to participate in an evening of free, family-friendly activities that celebrate both Latino culture and the value of literacy.

“Celebración de Mi Gente: El Día del Niño/El Día del Libro”

("Celebration of My People: Day of the Child/Day of the Book") is an annual event hosted by the college. It is free and open to the public. It is always held on or near the Mexican holiday of Día del Niño (April 30), which is also celebrated as Día del Libro by the American Library Association. The festival will feature a bilingual puppet show, bilingual storytelling and book-reading, dancing, crafts, face-painting, bilingual games, crafts, and delicious snacks. Clark College's mascot, Oswald the Penguin, will be on hand for photos with visiting children.

The event will be held in the Gaiser Student Center on Clark College's main campus. Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps. Anyone needing accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at (360) 992-2314 or (360) 991-0901 (VP), prior to the event.

See video about the puppet show and last year's festival:

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Video: Clark College/Nick Bremer-Korb

Crossing the Border between Art and Life



Art, America, rubber chickens—you never know what will show up next in the postmodern play *bobrauschenbergamerica*, the final work in Clark College Theatre's 2014-2015 season.

The play, written by Charles Mee, celebrates the work and spirit of influential American artist Robert Rauschenberg, known for incorporating found objects into his artwork. He claimed that he worked "in the gap between art and life," and *bobrauschenberamerica* lives in a similar borderland, jumbling together a collage of disparate plot threads, bizarre events, stand-alone monologues, and ridiculous non sequiturs. Don't miss this unique road trip through the American landscape.

"We chose this decidedly post-modern—and perhaps esoteric—script to expand the vocabulary of the theatre artists we are training here at Clark College," said director Rusty Tennant. "However, don't let that scare you. This homage to America is a nostalgia-packed trip down memory lane that is sure to tug at your heartstrings and poke at your funny-bone."

Cast includes Keren Garcia (Bob's Mom), Lydia Fleming (Bob's Mom), Sam Ruble (Becker), Tim Bush (Phil), Elena Mack (Susan), Andrew Forrest (Wilson), Phillip Graves (Allen), Cheyenne Belardes (Phil's Girl), Steven Kocalis (Carl/Rollerskater), Austin Williams ((Bob the Pizza Boy), and Nicole Kadow (Chicken/Understudy).

Show Dates: May 8, 9, 15, 16, 21, 22, and 23. All show times are at 7:30 p.m. Matinee show on May 16 at 2 p.m.

Ticket Information: Students (with ID) \$9; Alumni (with membership) \$9; Senior Citizens \$11; General Admission \$13. Tickets may be purchased in person at the Clark College Bookstore in Gaiser Hall, online at http://www.clarkbookstore.com/site_theatre.asp, or call 360-992-2815. If you need accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event, contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at 360-992-2314 or 360-991-0901 (VP), or visit the Penguin Union Building room 013, two weeks before the event.

Career Days is Big



Attendees meet potential employers at the 2014 Career Days job fair.

Clark College's Career Days is entering its fifth year with its largest-ever number of employers participating in two separate job fairs, as well as many new events designed to help today's job-seekers. The three-day event will be held April 27-29 at the college's main campus.

The annual event includes seminars, skills sessions, clinics, speaker panels, and other events designed to assist students and community members in their job search efforts and to prepare students in transferring to a bachelor's degree. All events are free and open to the public.

Schedule highlights (full schedule available [here](#)):

Monday, April 27

- Presentation: "LinkedIn & the Online Job Search"
- Speakers panel: "Careers in Science, Technology,

Engineering, and Math”

- Career assessment workshop

Tuesday, April 28

- Drop-in resume and LinkedIn Clinic
- Employer panel: “Succeeding at Your Job”

Wednesday, April 29

- Job Fair with representative from 61 employers
- Separate Health Careers Job Fair with representatives from 20 employers
- Photo booth for a free professional headshot for attendees’ LinkedIn profiles
- “Borrow an Expert” event in which successful Clark College alumni can be reserved for 15-minute conversations about jobs in their respective fields.

“Clark College takes great pride in its role as a promoter of economic vitality in our region,” said Clark College Career Services Director Edie Blakley. “Eleven of the 12 Career Days 2015 events bring employers and professionals from outside the college to connect with our students and community members. This provides immediate opportunities for jobs, skill development, networking, and getting information that can help our graduates put their degrees to work.”

All events are free to students and members of the community. No registration is required. Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps.

Complete information about the event – including times and locations of the various events – is available at www.clark.edu/cc/careerdays or by calling 360-992-2902.

Information about Clark College Career Services is available at www.clark.edu/cc/careerservices.

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

The Roots of Friendship Grow Stronger



The Women's Ensemble gets ready to perform at the 2015 Clark College Sakura Festival.



John Kageyama, *far left*, presented a check to the Clark College Foundation in the names of the Clark College Facilities Services staff in honor of their work to keep his shirofugen cherry trees thriving.

On an unseasonably warm April day, John Kageyama, president of America Kotobuki Electronics, stood on Clark College's main campus below one of the 100 shirofugen cherry trees he had donated to the City of Vancouver 25 years earlier. After a quarter-century, those trees had grown from fragile saplings to stately landmarks whose blossoms fell to the ground like pale pink snow.

"Thank you for taking such good care of these sakura," Kageyama said to the crowd assembled to celebrate the college's annual Sakura Festival on April 16. He noted that shirofugen trees require careful maintenance to flourish. "I never expected the trees to be so beautiful and so big."

This year's event marked not only the 25th anniversary of the trees' planting on Clark's campus, but also the 10th anniversary of the festival itself, which is held by the college in partnership with the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Rotary Club.



Korbin Hair, 5, stands atop a rock in the Japanese Friendship Garden during the 2015 Sakura Festival while his parents, Michael and Judy, stand nearby.

“Each year as these trees blossom, they signal new hopes, new beginnings, and the joyful arrival of spring,” said President Robert K. Knight during his opening remarks. “At the same time, because their blooming season is so brief—only about two weeks—they remind us to enjoy each day and to live life to the fullest.”

The trees are also a symbol of international friendship, and their blossoming has become occasion to celebrate the 20-year sister-city relationship between Vancouver and Joyo, Japan. Many guests were on hand to celebrate that relationship, including Portland Consul General for Japan Hiroshi Furusawa, Vancouver City Councilmembers Alisha Topper and Larry Smith, SEH America Inc. Executive Vice President Tatsuo Ito, Vancouver City Manager Eric Homes, former Vancouver mayor Bruce Hagensen, former Vancouver City Manager Pat McDonnell, and Clark College Trustees Jack Burkman, Royce Pollard, and Rekah Strong.

“We Japanese have had a special affinity for sakura for more than 10 centuries,” said Consul General Furusawa. “Thank you for your warm friendship and strong stewardship of these trees.”

Indeed, Kageyama ended his own remarks by announcing a donation of \$1,000 to the Clark College Foundation in the names of the college's Facilities Services staff members as a way to thank them for their work keeping the trees healthy. He also announced a donation to the Dr. Chihiro I Kanagawa Scholarship, which allows one student from Japan to study at Clark each year.



"Taking political science classes here has given me the opportunity to form my own ideas about Japanese politics," said Dr. Kanagawa Scholarship recipient Erina Yamazaki during the 2015 Sakura Festival.

Clad in a traditional formal kimono, this year's scholarship recipient, Erina Yamazaki, spoke movingly about her experiences both at Clark and in her home province of Fukushima. That region of Japan was devastated in 2011 by a tsunami and resulting nuclear power plant failure. While Yamazaki's home was not affected by the disaster, she remembered it as a "traumatic event" that nevertheless strengthened her faith in international friendship.

"I saw many countries and companies from around the world donated food and money to Japan," she said. "The feeling that we are supported by so many people from all over the world

gives us the motivation to start new things.”

The opening ceremony included performances by flautist LeeAnn McKenna and Yukiko Vossen on the *koto*, a traditional Japanese stringed instrument, as well as by the Clark College Women’s Ensemble.



Children from Clark’s Child & Family Studies program show off their sakura-themed artwork during the 2015 Sakura Festival.

Afterward, entertainment included a traditional dance performance by the Clark College Japanese Club, a drum performance by Portland Taiko, and a presentation of sakura-themed art by children from Clark’s Child & Family Studies program. The family-friendly event included lots of free activities and cookies from the Clark College Bakery.

Tax accountant Michael Hair was taking a well-deserved break with his family at the festival after the end of tax season. His elder son, Alex, 9, had the day off from school anyway, and he and Michael were carefully folding origami paper into cranes and frogs. Michael’s wife, Judy, and younger son, Korbin, 5, sat a few tables away watching the taiko drummers perform.



Members of Portland Taiko
Drum perform during the 2015
Sakura Festival.

Michael Hair began taking Japanese classes at Clark last year. "I've always enjoyed other cultures," he said. "It's a full life going to school, going to work, and taking care of a family. But I read something a while back that really stuck with me. It basically said, if there's something you've always wanted to do, go do it; don't wait. So I came here and I actually really enjoy the classes."

Meanwhile, Alex was dancing to the taiko drums in his chair, clearly a fan of the festival. "My favorites are the drums and the origami," he said. "I like the way the drums make me feel like someone's beating on my heart. And I like the origami because it helps me calm down again after the drums."