

# Redefining Possible



Despite losing his legs at age 5, Spencer West recently climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro.

When Spencer West was 5 years old, he lost his legs to a rare genetic disease. "My family was told I would never sit up by myself, I would never be able to walk on my own, I would never have a normal life," he said.

Yet West went on to disprove those grim predictions. Not only can he sit upright—he turned cartwheels in cheerleading competitions when he was in high school. Not only can he walk on his own—in 2012 he climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro on his hands. And while it's true that West is not leading what many would consider a normal life, that's because "normal" lives don't generally include traveling the world on behalf of a global nonprofit, sharing the stage with the Dalai Lama, or being featured in major news media across the world.

West shared his story with a crowded Gaiser Student Center on March 7. He had been invited to speak by the Associated Students of Clark College. West, a motivational speaker who works for the global charity Me to We, raised a half million dollars through his mountain climb last year for clean-water projects in drought-stricken Kenya. He said he wanted to share some of the lessons he learned through that experience with students at Clark.

One of those lessons was the importance of asking for help. West didn't climb Mt. Kilimanjaro himself—two of his good friends came with him and helped keep him going as he climbed 17,200 feet primarily on his own hands. In turn, he was able to help them when, near the summit, they became weakened by altitude sickness; West, it turned out, was one of those uncommon individuals not affected by altitude sickness, so he had the energy to encourage his friends during the final ascent.

The audience in Gaiser Student Center was clearly captured by West's story. When he played video of himself and his friends pushing through their exhaustion to finally reach the mountain's summit, the room erupted into loud cheers and applause, and several audience members could be seen wiping away tears.

West finished his speech by describing the manmade stacks of rock called "cairns" that other climbers had left along the trail to the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro—a way for climbers to tell each other that they were going the right way, and that someone had made it this far already. "We all have a capacity to be a cairn for other people," he said. "We all need to be the cairn for ourselves, for our friends, for our family, and for the world."

*Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

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# A Dramatic Lesson



On the evening of February 21, the Clark College Theatre Department opened its doors to students and community members for the dress rehearsal of the winter quarter musical, "RENT." Forty of those community members were students from the Boys and Girls Club of Southwest Washington, brought on a trip organized by Clark College Admissions and Student Recruitment.

RENT—a Tony Award-winning musical that covers issues of sexuality, drug use, and AIDS—can be challenging for younger audiences. Youth were required to have permission slips signed by parents in order to attend the show. Afterward, they had a chance to participate in a panel discussion with all of the

actors, where the youth asked questions about some of the subjects that they witnessed in the play, how actors prepared for their role and how each person decided which character they wanted to be.

Clark College Theatre instructor Gene Biby, who directed RENT, worked with Admissions and Recruitment to make the event a success. He arranged the panel of actors and facilitated the question-and-answer session.

“We received nothing but positive feedback from both students and chaperones of the Boys and Girls Club and hope to arrange similar visits with the theater department in the future,” said Student Recruitment Specialist Narek Daniyelyan. “Big thanks to the wonderful staff of the Boys and Girls Club of Southwest Washington, who continuously partner with Clark College and share the advantages of attending Clark with their students. Special thanks to all of the actors who were willing to stay late to talk to the youth of our community.”

*Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

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## **More than a Dream**



Dr. Darryl Brice said he appreciated this photo of Dr. King because it looks as if Dr. King is pointing to the viewers and asking them what they are going to do to promote justice.

“If you look at that ‘I Have a Dream’ speech that everyone references ... look at the front part,” said Dr. Darryl Brice as he gave Clark College’s Martin Luther King Jr. Day keynote speech to an audience gathered in Gaiser Student Center on January 22. “Everyone talks about the dream, but there was a nightmare part where he talked about the reality of what was going on at the time.”

Brice, an Instructor of Sociology and Diversity and Globalism Studies at Highline Community College, went on to expand on his speech’s central thesis—that the more radical elements of Dr. King’s legacy have been “co-opted or omitted” in favor of a softer, less challenging image of the civil rights leader as a dreamer. As Brice put it, “You don’t get arrested over 30 times for having a dream.”

Brice detailed aspects of Dr. King’s politics that he said are

often omitted: his opposition to the Vietnam War, his anti-poverty activism, his criticism of income and wealth disparities between African-Americans and white Americans, and his harsh criticism of well-meaning white liberals who did not recognize their own internal racism. He also pointed out that in his day, Dr. King was considered so dangerous that the FBI put him on its COINTELPRO watch list.

Brice continued by saying that “Dr. King’s dream was never attained.” He presented charts showing that great disparities remain in the wealth and incomes of African-Americans and white Americans. He urged audience members to “have the same courage” Dr. King showed to fight against injustice. When asked what college students in particular could do, he answered, “Hold us accountable—that’s what college students have always done.”



Dr. Darryl Brice, *white shirt*, with members of Clark’s MLK Planning Committee and President Bob Knight, *third from left*.

The event, presented by Clark’s MLK Planning Committee and sponsored by the Office of Equity and Diversity and the Service-Learning and Volunteer Program, was part of the college’s official celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

A native of Baltimore, Maryland, Dr. Brice attended Frostburg State University, where he received his bachelor's degree in Political Science and Justice Studies. He received his master's and doctoral degrees in Sociology from Loyola University Chicago. He has taught at Highline since 2003, and in 2008 was recognized as its Faculty Member of the Year. In 2007 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints honored him with the Teachers Assisting in Discovery award. In 2009 he was the recipient of the NISOD (National Institute for Staff and Development) Excellence Award. In addition, Dr. Brice has appeared in *Who's Who Among America's Teachers*.

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

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## **Older and Wiser**



President Knight bestows a Presidential Coin on Information Technology Application and Database Developer Andy Barsotti during the 2013 annual State of the College address.

As Clark College nears its 80th anniversary, its longevity can be seen both as one of its greatest challenges and as one of its greatest strengths. Clark College President Bob Knight explored that theme during his annual State of the College Address, held January 17 in Gaiser Student Center.

“When you’ve been part of a region for 80 years, most people know your name,” he said to an audience composed of Clark College employees, students, and community leaders. “They know of you. But they may not know much *about* you. Or they may remember you as you were years ago. They may not know who you are *today*.”

Knight went on to list some of the things that distinguish Clark College from other community colleges in the region, including its outstanding engineering, nursing, dental



hygiene, welding, machining, automotive, diesel and other programs; its Running Start program (the largest in the state); its eLearning program, which 20 percent of all for-credit students participate in; its exemplary Mature Learning program; and its partnerships with regional development organizations including the Columbia River Economic Development Council, Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council, WSU Vancouver, the High Tech Council of Clark County, and local school districts. He also noted that last year Clark became Washington state's largest single-campus community college in terms of for-credit classes, serving 26,000 students each year.

"We are not the small college that many people remember," he said. "We are big, and we are growing."



President Bob Knight gives the 2013 State of the College address.

Knight elaborated on the many ways Clark is growing, both physically—through such projects as a new STEM building on its main campus and a new campus in northern or central Clark County—as well as instructionally and organizationally. He

noted that the college has begun developing new programs like Health Informatics and Mechatronics to meet new workforce needs, and may consider offering bachelor's degrees in some fields in the future. He added that the college would work with WSU Vancouver in creating any such degree programs.

Knight listed other ways the college is growing and adapting. He highlighted the college's recent use of lean processes to improve how both Student Affairs and Instruction function. He pointed out the benefits of two recent relocations: those of Corporate and Continuing Education and of Adult Basic Education/English as a Second Language. CCE's move to downtown Vancouver, he said, has helped it to provide more support for the local business community. ABE/ESL's move from Town Plaza to the "T Building" across Fort Vancouver Way from the main campus, meanwhile, has provided its students with greater access to student services and educational opportunity.

"We hope they will not just complete basic education, but will cross the road to continue their education by taking college courses," Knight said of those ABE/ESL students.

Knight pointed out that all of these improvements and developments are being done at a time of deep budget cuts. At Clark's 75th anniversary, he said, about 60 percent of the college's funding came from the state; today, that number is below 40 percent. This has resulted in a higher economic burden on students, who have seen regular tuition increases—as well as on faculty and staff, who have accepted temporary 3-percent wage reductions.

Knight thanked the Clark College Foundation for its work in raising funds to improve programs despite state budget cuts—while acknowledging that such success creates its own challenge. "Ironically, because the Clark College Foundation does such great work, they have a perception problem," he said. "Some people believe they have more than enough money to meet the needs of the college. That's just not true."

Knight concluded his speech by asking audience members—both employees and students, as well as friends and community leaders—to work together to support the college.

“Together, we can support our students’ dreams—and fulfill our vision for our college and our region—by putting Clark first,” he said.

Afterward, many in the audience walked across the street to view the new ABE/ESL facilities. One such person was Vancouver City Councilor Jeanne Harris, who attended Clark herself. As she walked, she said that she appreciated Knight’s overview of where the college is—and where it is heading.

“It helps those of us who are on campus maybe once a year to put it all together,” she said. “It made me proud of Clark College.”

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

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## **Moving Toward Their Future**



As soon as President Bob Knight concluded his annual State of the College address, many audience members grabbed their coats and hurried out of Gaiser Student Center—not because they were eager to leave, but because they wanted to see the new location of Adult Basic Education/English as a Second Language. These programs, which were housed at Town Plaza for five years, moved to the Roy and Virginia Anderson Educational Complex (better known as the “T Building”) at the end of 2012.

The new facilities have many advantages over the old Town Plaza location: more windows, better temperature regulation, updated classroom technology. But perhaps the biggest improvement is the location itself, just across Fort Vancouver Way from Clark College’s main campus. This allows students easy access to college services like the Career Center and Cannell Library, as well as the chance to participate in student life.

“Students from Day One are operating as college students,” said Director of Basic Education Larry Ruddell as he greeted

visitors to his program's open house.

Workforce Pathways Program Manager Tiffany Williams pointed out that it wasn't just students who benefited from access to the main campus; she and her colleagues were now able to easily take advantage of staff- and faculty-development events that previously required a car trip for Town Plaza employees.



Williams was giving tours of the new Pathways Learning Center, which was markedly different from its form at Town Plaza. There, 15 computers were arranged at tables facing the walls, making it difficult to do group teaching about computer

skills; now, 24 computer stations are arranged at rows of desks in a traditional classroom layout, with a space for an instructor and a pull-down screen at the front of a room filled with natural light. This has allowed staff and faculty to begin teaching classes on everything from computer-based job searches to introductory web design.

"We've already started serving more students," said Williams. "At our old location, we would average five to seven students at our classes; just this week, we had 14. When we get here in the morning to open the door, there are already students waiting to get in."

Nearly 1,400 students took basic education classes at Clark College during the 2012 fall quarter alone.

Ruddell said that students have adjusted well to the move, with few having trouble finding their way to the new location. "We prepared them so thoroughly that on the first day of [winter quarter] classes, we were getting more lost students from the main campus than we were from our own student population," he said.

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

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## Doing Good in the Worst of Times



On Jan. 13, the day after a magnitude 7.0 earthquake hit the island nation of Haiti just 16 miles outside of its capital, Port-au-Prince, Enrico “Rico” Selga received a call from Medical Teams International (MTI), a church-based nonprofit offering medical assistance to countries in need. Selga, a nurse, has volunteered with the group for about eight years and is on their “on call” list to respond to disasters right away. Immediately, Selga began preparing to leave for three weeks in

Haiti—negotiating time off from work, gathering supplies, and squaring things away before his departure.

Nothing, however, could truly prepare him for the devastation he encountered when he arrived in Port-au-Prince on a United Nations plane. “You have to realize, after the earthquake

230,000 people died instantly," he said. "But then there's another half million homeless people, living in makeshift camps. They're refugees inside their own country, living in tents, huts, cardboard boxes, most of them with just sheets to cover themselves. And we're seeing 27 new camps start up a day. You can imagine the kind of chaos that brings."

Selga is a familiar face at Clark College. After graduating from Mountain View High School in 1993, he attended Clark for two years, earning an Associate Degree in Nursing before transferring to WSU Vancouver to continue his education. With his wife, Jennifer, he owns the Coffee Lounge espresso stand in Foster Hall.

But while many Clarkers know Selga as an alumnus and a business owner, fewer know about Selga's frequent trips—about one a year—to provide medical relief in some of the world's most traumatized and impoverished nations. And fewer still realize what a toll his most recent trip to earthquake-stricken Haiti has taken on him and his fellow volunteers.

"I think the adjustment coming back is a lot harder than the adjustment you make going there," he said during an interview just days after his return on March 1, pulling off his battered wire-frame glasses to rub his eyes wearily. "You always have a reverse culture shock. When you come back, everything's hunky dory, people are walking around like nothing's happened. And I—I just had my soul shaken."



Crowded together in unsanitary conditions and without access to clean drinking water, Haitians were easy prey for every kind of disease imaginable: malaria, fevers, diarrhea, infections. Additionally, even those who survived the earthquake often sustained serious injuries, and these were now becoming infected. And with the country's infrastructure and medical institutions decimated by the quake, people had nowhere to go for treatment.

That's where Selga came in. Working with a team of three other medical professionals, as well as with American and Nepalese military personnel to provide security, he set up a temporary clinic in one camp. "Instantly, you have a line of 200 to 300 people," he says. "Even in the morning, it's 85 degrees, totally humid, and people don't care, they're desperate for help."

Selga and his teammates would work until it became too hot for them to function. Most of his colleagues got sick during their time in Haiti—either from heat stroke, dysentery, or plain exhaustion. "You get sick, and you just keep working," Selga said. "You put yourself in a situation where people are suffering and you can help, and it becomes: Every second you don't work, that's people you could help, but aren't. You forget to eat. ... Of course you get dehydrated. We had to start IVs on our own teammates."

Back home, Jennifer Selga worried for her husband's safety, but kept upbeat as she apprised Coffee Lounge customers of his work. Many patrons had learned about Selga's trip when, just days before he left, a note on the Coffee Lounge tip jar explained that he would be donating all tips to Haitians. "Between Tuesday and Friday, we collected \$200," Jennifer Selga said.



That wasn't the extent of Clarkers' support. History professor Dr. Anita Fisher, who met Selga when he was part of Model UN as a student, mentioned the Haiti trip to the History Club, whose members quickly arranged a rummage sale to raise funds for Selga to take with him. Between the sale's proceeds and Fisher's own personal contribution, they were able to give Selga another \$140, which he then distributed to Haitians personally when he got there.

Fisher has stayed in contact with Selga over the years. "He was a serious student," she recalls. "He always did his work, and he was always interested in other people's cultures. He was just a natural humanitarian—you just got that sense right from the beginning."

Jennifer Selga said that she has grown accustomed to her husband's giving away all his possessions on these trips—which, sure enough, he did before he left Haiti. "I've learned to give him presents for his car," she said. "He can't take his car with him."

But Selga's missions of mercy cost him more than just luggage. He's taking unpaid leave, so he's lost a month's worth of salary. He comes home exhausted. And this time, he also lost something more precious than money or sleep: He lost a friend. One of Selga's



teammates, Issaquah nurse Matt Bouthillier, died of cardiac arrest on March 1, the day Selga flew out of Haiti.

"We heard about it when we touched down in Dallas," Selga said. "I thought they were joking. I'd spent the whole last evening there with him, talking and laughing. ... He looked healthy. It just happened so fast."

Despite this grim reminder of the perils of his volunteer work, Selga doesn't plan to quit anytime soon. In fact, he's planning on returning to Haiti in the summer—and Fisher is considering going with him.

“There's nothing that's as rewarding as helping other people,” Selga said. “You could see it in the Haitians' eyes, the gratitude; they didn't have to say a word. They're very gracious people, very kind and hospitable.”

Selga offered one last note of caution to people who might be tempted to forget about Haiti's plight as it fades from the top of the news headlines. “This is the calm before the storm,” he warned. “The rainy season is coming, and people still don't have shelter. You're going to see a lot of people die.”

And somewhere in a tent, or a half-demolished church-turned-clinic, or a makeshift shelter in the middle of a refugee camp, Selga will be there, trying to stem the tide.

*The photos accompanying this article were taken by Enrico Selga during his trip to Haiti. For those who would like to donate to Haiti relief efforts, Selga suggests choosing a “good charity that fits their values.” A good first step is to visit a site like **Charity Navigator** that rates charities' effectiveness.*