

# Notes from California



Concert Choir performing at Union Square, directed by Pavel Kovalenko, student director.

Eighty-eight members of the Clark College Concert Band and Concert Choir represented Clark College by performing in San Francisco, California, the week after spring quarter ended. The tour and performances culminated a year of concerts presented by these two Clark College music groups.

During the trip, which occurred June 23-26, the groups performed two concerts together, followed by individual choral and band workshops taught by nationally recognized conductors. One performance was service-related: The groups gave a free concert at the San Francisco Veterans Administration Community Living Center. It was a moving experience for the students. Following the performance, student Jessica Banks called it

“amazing” and “a beautiful experience.”

The second performance served a public-relations function: This free concert at Union Square promoted Clark College’s excellence and drew a large crowd that responded with enthusiasm to the students’ skill and talent.

The Band and Choir each had opportunities to be rehearsed by notable music educator/conductors. The Concert Choir worked with world-renowned conductor Elena Sharkova of the Symphony Silicon Valley; students came away from the experience edified and validated for their work and passion for singing. Choir member Isabelle Wilson said afterward, “I am leaving San Francisco amazed and coming home so inspired. Not only by our performances this week, but the heart and talent and laughter that went along with it. This was a weekend I won’t forget because of my Concert Choir family. I was inspired after working with Elena Sharkova, and I am inspired by all of you. Thank you for making my year.”

The Concert Band worked with Charles R. Barrett at San Francisco State University, taking away new skills and insights to performing that will benefit them technically and musically.

Both groups attended a professional chamber music concert at the Davies Symphony Hall, which for many of the students was a new experience. Band director Rich Inouye commented, “This tour really represents the comprehensive education we try to provide at Clark. It was the perfect balance of culture, education, and performance, and the students really had a great experience.”

*Photo: courtesy of April Duvic*

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# Banking on Student Success



Roger Hinshaw, Bank of America's president in Oregon and Southwest Washington, and Monique Barton, senior VP of corporate social responsibility, at the bank's offices in Portland. In July, they presented a \$15,000 gift for Clark College's Volunteer & Service-Learning program.

Bank of America has donated \$15,000 to Clark College's Volunteer & Service-Learning program to prepare more than 1,000 students with valuable on-the-job training. The funding will assist with community partnerships and program expenses.

The Volunteer & Service-Learning program places students in more than 100 community nonprofits and governmental

organizations, including American Red Cross, Boys and Girls Clubs, Columbia Springs, Habitat Store, and Hazel Dell Community Garden. Students receive experience that promotes their personal growth and contributes to their understanding of course material.

For example, Clark students have volunteered to build homes with Evergreen Habitat for Humanity; students taking Spanish have read bilingual versions of children's books at local elementary schools as a service-learning component of their classes. These experiences not only enrich the students' education, they can give students the real-world work experience that can lead to paying jobs.

The Bank of America grant will boost the resources for such major events as Career Days, which needs more than 100 volunteers to operate successfully. It will also allow the program to offer more service-learning opportunities; elevate awareness of career- and service-learning; and finalize new relationships with local businesses. Additionally, Bank of America employees will volunteer their own time to participate in Career Days and to educate students about personal finance.

Clark College President Robert K. Knight said the college's primary goal is to improve the rate of post-secondary completion. "As a result of the alignment with Bank of America, Clark anticipates students will receive high-quality work history experiences—particularly for students with little or no previous work experience—through service learning and community engagement experiences, and opportunities for civic and community engagement, career exploration, life and soft-skill development," he said.

"Providing grants to local nonprofit organizations that support career readiness is part of Bank of America's broader effort to help create economically vibrant communities," said Roger Hinshaw, Bank of America's president in Oregon and Southwest Washington. "As part of that, we're proud to support

Clark College's Career Service-Learning Program, which helps prepare college students to enter the workforce and, in turn, support our local economy."

Clark's Career Services department, which oversees the Volunteer & Service-Learning program, has a history of aligning college classroom learning with current community needs; promoting personal growth of college students through reflection about self, society and the future; combining experiential with academic instruction to focus on critical thinking and civic responsibility; and organizing on- and off-campus events that provide quality service opportunities for Clark College students, faculty and staff.

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## All in the Family



Presidential Scholarship recipient Ramona Vercher at Clark College's 2013 Commencement.

Every last Sunday of the month, the Vercher family holds a big dinner for all its many members: Donnie and Louise Vercher, their nine children, 14 grandchildren, and assorted in-laws, relatives, and friends. The family would have plenty to celebrate at their June dinner: Ramona Vercher, the second-youngest of the Vercher children, was named the recipient of the 2013-14 Community College President's Award. The annual scholarship is given to a Clark College graduate who is transferring to a Washington State University Vancouver degree program; it provides full-time tuition for one year, renewable for one additional year, for a total of four semesters.

The whole Vercher family was in attendance at commencement, when the award is announced. As Clark College President Bob Knight described Vercher's achievements, a massive cheer filled the amphitheater when the family realized she had won.

Vercher, who is a resident of Vancouver, graduated with honors, earning an associate degree in business administration. A first-generation college graduate, she plans to major in business administration with a specialization in finance while attending WSU Vancouver.

While at Clark, Vercher served in a number of volunteer roles both on and off campus. She was a work-study tutor at the Student Learning Center helping Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), and English as a Second Language (ESL) students in all subjects. She was also a Classroom Tutor, assisting professors in the classroom, and part of Clark's Homework Help program, where she assisted individual students. Within the greater community, her volunteer service has included work with the City of Vancouver's Urban Youth and Urban Forestry programs. Additionally, she helps run the charity begun by her family's small business, Daddy D's BBQ, providing Christmas presents to

families in need, and works there as a cashier.

“Receiving this scholarship means everything in the world to me,” said Ramona Vercher after the ceremony. “I am a first-generation college student, so to have this opportunity to continue my education is the biggest thing that has ever happened to me in my life.”

Knight said that people who know Vercher praised her for her strong work ethic. Indeed, Vercher has often begun study sessions at 5 a.m. to fit them around her work and other activities. She and her longtime boyfriend, Dwan James (also a Clark student), have regularly eschewed fun weekend outings for “date nights” of studying.

Vercher attributes her work ethic to the example set by her parents; Donnie regularly works 13 hours a day at his barbecue restaurant, a business he began after breaking his back doing construction work on bridges. “I never graduated high school,” said Donnie. “I think [Ramona] sees what her parents went through and wants better.”

Indeed, many of the Vercher children are pursuing education. Ramona’s brother Sherman recently graduated from Western Oregon University, and two of her sisters received their GED diplomas at Clark’s GED and high school completion ceremony on June 22.

Vercher was one of three finalists selected for the award. President Knight announced that the other two finalists, Jennifer Campbell and David Taub, would receive \$1,000 scholarships from the Clark College Foundation to continue their education. Knight said of the three finalists, “They are all sterling examples of what Clark College is about.”

Vercher plans to continue being an example of both Clark College and her family. “I am going to do big things through this scholarship,” she said. “This definitely won’t be the last you see of me.”

*Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

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## Now and Then



*Left to right, George Welsh and President Bob Knight congratulate Outstanding Alumni Award recipient Professor Michael Greenwood.*

Clark College's alumni association celebrated connections and camaraderie at the annual Alumni Student Dinner on June 4.

Students and alumni gathered to honor Outstanding Alumni Award recipient Professor Michael Greenwood '61, who taught mathematics at Clark for more than 30 years. He played a role in taking Clark and Washington State University Vancouver global when he taught at Krasnoyarsk State University in



Russia on a Fulbright Award.

More than 120 students and alumni exchanged business cards and laughs over dinner, which was partially underwritten by community partner Riverview Community Bank.

The alumni association also gave two, \$2,000 scholarships to Clark students Ashton Kyllo and Natalie Hendren. The awards were given to the students by a previous recipient, Rebecca Zeff, who is finishing her degree at WSUV and plans to attend medical school following graduation.

George Welsh '67, alumni association president, said that bringing together alumni and students is a great opportunity to support each other.

“The students hear what is happening in our community from alumni, and the alumni are reminded of their own days at Clark, which helped begin many career paths,” Welsh said. “Clark is a special place and this event helps all of us stay connected.”

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*