

# Knight earns First Citizen Award



President Robert K. Knight

Clark College President Robert K. Knight has been named Clark County's 2016 First Citizen, an award recognizing a Clark County resident who has modeled exemplary citizenship through their actions and service to the community. The award, which was announced in July, will be presented to Knight at a reception on November 2.

"I am honored by this prestigious recognition from the people I feel lucky to have called friends and neighbors for nearly two decades," said Knight upon learning of the award. "Knowing that I am now counted among such amazing contributors to our community inspires me to continue serving that community in any way I can."

The nomination focused heavily on Knight's career at Clark College, where he is said to have "brought stability to a position he did not seek." Knight, who originally joined the college as vice president of Administrative Services in 2004 and was named acting president in 2006, has overseen several major achievements at the college, including: construction of both Clark College at Columbia Tech Center and a new state-of-the-art, 70,000 square-foot building devoted to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math; the opening of the college's Veterans Resource Center; and one of the largest enrollment spurts of any community college in Washington State. Last year, Clark was listed among the nation's 150 best community colleges by the Aspen Institute. Much of this success is the result of Knight's leadership, which is defined by his ability to listen intently, build relationships, support others and foster collaboration.

Letters of support also noted Knight's giving of time and resources, off campus and outside of work. For years, Knight volunteered 30-to-40 hours each month in addition to overseeing the college. He was a leadership force behind the City of Vancouver's 150th anniversary celebration and was important in bringing the Vietnam Traveling Wall to Vancouver. His involvement was instrumental in bringing prominent speakers to the region for the George C. Marshall Lecture Series, which included news anchor Tom Brokaw and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. In 2000, he helped Vancouver become one of only six cities in the nation selected to host a regional commemoration for the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, which drew a crowd of 3,000 to the Vancouver National Historic Reserve.

Described as "one of the most active community volunteers in our region" by former Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard, Knight has given his time and talents to organizations including the local chapter of the American Red Cross, Boys and Girls Clubs of Southwest Washington, the Columbia River Economic

Development Council, Fort Vancouver National Trust, Greater Portland, Washington State University Vancouver and Workforce Southwest Washington.

In truth, though, Knight's service began long before he landed in Clark County and reaches far beyond this region. For 21 years, he served with the U.S. Army in various ranks and across two continents. Numerous letters of support cited his military career as an example of his leadership, especially during his role as commander of the Vancouver Barracks when the base was targeted for closure. Knight convened community members in a thoughtful, open process that Vesta Hospitality CEO Rick Takach characterizes as being "critical to the jewel that is the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site."

In all, each of the 29 letters of support—seven of which came from former First Citizens—demonstrate how Knight has shown effectiveness in leadership roles, raised standards and expectations, strengthened community identity and civic pride.

"In everything he does and every role he performs, Bob always puts service over self, mission over personal interest," wrote former U.S. Representative Brian Baird. "Without question, Vancouver, Clark County, Southwest Washington and indeed our nation are better places because of Bob Knight."

### **About the First Citizen Award**

Recipients of the First Citizen Award, presented since 1939, are selected by a volunteer committee of community leaders and past award recipients. Recipients are chosen for their accomplishments and contributions to the community in a number of areas, including effectiveness in leadership roles, raising community standards and expectations, strengthening community identity and civic pride, and exemplary giving of time, self and resources. For a full listing of criteria and past recipients, please visit [www.cfsww.org/our-community/first-citizen](http://www.cfsww.org/our-community/first-citizen).

## About the First Citizen Awards Event

Knight will receive the First Citizen Award during a community event scheduled for Wednesday, November 2 at Warehouse '23. The event will begin at 4 p.m., with the formal awards program at 5 p.m. Regents Bank is the presenting sponsor of the First Citizen Award reception. Biggs Insurance and PeaceHealth are supporting sponsors, and the event is organized in partnership with *The Columbian* and the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington. Tickets for the event are \$35 and can be purchased at the door or in advance by visiting [www.columbian.com/firstcitizen](http://www.columbian.com/firstcitizen).

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## Meet the Coaches



With their low tuition rates and open-door enrollment policies, community colleges have long been a way for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds to pursue higher education and career advancement. However, students experiencing poverty often face challenges that go beyond paying for school. Financial hardship can turn anything from transportation to Internet access into a potential obstacle that could derail a student's plans.

That's why Clark College recently hired four new Resource Coaches to help students remain successful and supported all the way through their educational journey. The coaches were hired through a Working Families Success Network grant announced earlier this year, with supplementation from a grant from the Community Foundation of Southwest Washington, and are part of a collegewide effort to improve Clark's support and understanding of students in poverty.

"We want these coaches to be a resource not just for our

students, but for our employees as well,” said Associate Director of Workforce Education Services Armetta Burney. “Our hope is that, when staff or faculty encounter a student who seems to be overwhelmed by poverty-related challenges, they’ll know that they can refer the student to one of our coaches for help.”

According to most-recent data, almost half of Clark’s students are low-income, and almost three-quarters of them are first-generation students. These students may lack stable housing or a quiet place to study. They may have difficulty affording basic school supplies, or child care, or transportation to and from school. Additionally, college can feel very lonely for these students. Because they’re the first to attend college, they may not feel like they can turn to their family or friends for support or advice; meanwhile, they may feel alienated from classmates and faculty who don’t understand the unique challenges they face.

These four new Resource Coaches are meant to change that dynamic. Now, when a student is making the transition from basic education courses to credit-bearing college ones, they’ll have support from a Transitional Studies Coach during the process. When they’re struggling to afford housing or food, the Workforce Education Services Coach can help them apply for public benefits and connect with community organizations. If college becomes overwhelming and their grades begin to slip, the Retention and Career Coach can help them get back on track. And if they find their finances stretched thin, the Financial Literacy Coach can help them set up a budget and figure out strategies to make the most out of their financial resources.

While many of these services have been available at the college in different forms, the coaches add a personal relationship that can help keep at-risk students from slipping through the cracks.

“We almost never talk to a student just once,” explains Transitional Studies Coach Nicole Hopkins. “After we meet with a student, we call them back. And I will call them again and again if I have to: ‘Hey, how are you doing? Are you working on that plan we figured out for you?’ I am happy to walk students across the street to someone’s office if I think they need more help after our meeting.”

Additionally, the Resource Coaches serve as advocates to the rest of the college, sharing their students’ perspectives and working to make Clark a more inclusive environment. They offer workshops to Clark faculty and staff on how to communicate with students experiencing poverty, including one held during the college’s first-ever Teaching and Learning Days in August. The additional grant from the Community Foundation of Southwest Washington funds the Financial Literacy Coach’s work teaching workshops on financial resources and skills to students in order to help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

“We want to help remove the stigma and misperceptions about poverty, both here at Clark and within our broader community,” says Director of Career Services Edie Blakley. “We see it as part of the college’s role as a learning institution.”

## **Meet the Coaches**



**Nicole, Transitional Studies Coach**

Nicole works with students enrolled in Clark's Transitional Studies program—which includes English as a Second Language, Adult High School Diploma, and GED Preparation—as they transfer into credit-bearing courses at the college. When students come in to meet her, she helps them assess which resources they have, and which they lack, to succeed at Clark. She discusses their personal and educational goals and helps them identify potential barriers, connecting them to resources that might help diminish those barriers. Often she guides them through options like I-BEST and Learning Communities that could help them enter college successfully. And she helps them with college logistics like testing and registration.

Nicole calls her job “exciting and inspiring,” adding, “each one of us has our own story, and it is my privilege to be a part of someone’s story. I get the opportunity to help students move past the barriers on their journey toward success and the best part is, I get to celebrate with them as they reach each goal.”

*Contact: TBG 209; M-F 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.; [nhopkins@clark.edu](mailto:nhopkins@clark.edu)*



**Angelica, Workforce Education Services Coach**

Angelica works primarily with students enrolled in Workforce Education programs, which help low-income and unemployed individuals earn vocational/technical degrees and certificates. She helps guide these students through college processes, from applying for financial aid to setting up their student email. With years of experience working with people experiencing poverty, she can help connect students to support services both inside and outside the college so they can focus on their education.

“My position excites me because I am able to provide information to students about resources that they may not have been aware of,” Angelica says. “I love to see students grow and develop into professionals as they complete their degrees at Clark. I have been able to build lasting relationships with students that go beyond degree attainment.”

*Contact: GHL 128; T 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., W 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., Th 9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.; WESCoach@clark.edu*



**Craig, Financial Literacy Coach**

Attending college brings with it a whole slew of financial challenges. For a person who's used to living paycheck to paycheck, receiving a quarter's worth of financial aid at one time can be difficult to manage. Books, fees, and equipment can cost hundreds of dollars. Craig's job is to help students manage their budgets and avoid common pitfalls. He helps them check their credit scores and shop for the best bank or credit card to fit their needs. He works with them to develop plans to work through any debt or financial challenges they currently have, as well as long-term plans to help them create a solid financial foundation from which to build. Additionally, Craig regularly holds workshops on financial literacy through the Career Center and the Library.

"I enjoy helping students understand how to make money work for them, thereby bringing them closer to attaining their dreams," he says.

*Contact: PUB 002; M-F 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.; [cebersole@clark.edu](mailto:cebersole@clark.edu)*



**Alex, Retention & Career Coach**

Most students come to Alex for one of two reasons: Either they're not sure where they want to go, or they've hit a stumbling block on the road to get there. Alex helps students explore careers and academic fields that fit their skills and interests, and then create a plan to reach their chosen goal. Additionally, she helps students whose grades have triggered an Academic Early Warning, helping them take the steps they need to get their grades back on track without jeopardizing their financial aid. She takes a holistic look at their lives, helping connect them with services that can help them with not just their academic challenges but their personal ones as well.

"I think being a former Clark student myself helps me understand what these students are going through," says Alex, who earned her associate degree in 2009 before transferring to Portland State University for her bachelor's. "What excites me about this position is the opportunity to support students in accessing and using relevant campus and community resources, help prioritize their success and set strong, personalized goals, and ultimately tie these skills to their future career goals."

*Contact: HSC 124; T & W 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Th 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.;  
amartin@clark.edu*

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

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# Honoring Those Who Fell, Supporting Those Who Served



Members of the 142nd Wing of the Portland Air National Guard formed the color guard that opened the Veterans Resource Center ribbon-cutting event on May 22.

On May 22, the Thursday before Memorial Day, Clark College hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony for its recently opened Veterans Resource Center (VRC). The event began with a color guard and the singing of the National Anthem by student Petya

Grozeva. VRC Coordinator Kurt Kolch introduced the event by reminding guests that unlike Veterans Day, which honors those among us who have served in the military, Memorial Day is a day to remember those men and women who died while serving.

Physics professor Dick Shamrell, a 25-year Air Force veteran, spoke about how veterans resource centers like Clark's helped him and his wife to succeed at second careers outside of the military. He also described how his military experience enriches his teaching—when asked by a student what the speed of sound was, for example, he can accurately describe what it is like to go *twice* that speed.



A ceremonial ribbon to the VRC's doorway was cut by Clark College President Bob Knight, student veteran Alex Peraza, VRC donor Jane Hagelstein and Jennifer Rhoads, president of the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington, which

contributed \$30,000 toward the VRC in November. The Vancouver Barracks Historical Society provided military uniforms and maps relevant to the region for guests to view.

Peraza, a veteran of the U.S. Army who served as an infantryman in Iraq, is in his second year at Clark pursuing a Associate of Applied Technology degree in electrical engineering; after graduating from Clark, he plans to pursue his bachelor's degree at Washington State University Vancouver. A single father of three children, he said he is motivated to continue his studies "not only by my children's needs, but by my nation's needs," citing President Obama's 2011 State of the Union address that connected the country's success to an increase in graduates from fields related to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

“The people at the Veteran Resource Center at Clark College are the reason why I have been so successful in the past and moving forward,” Peraza added. “From [Veterans Affairs Program Specialist] Mike Gibson to [VetCorps Navigator] Tim McPharlin, as well as supporting staff, all have helped me navigate the hurdles and obstacles of being a student veteran.”

Approximately 700 veterans enroll at Clark College every quarter, about 500 of whom use GI Bill benefits to help pay for tuition, fees, housing, books and supplies.

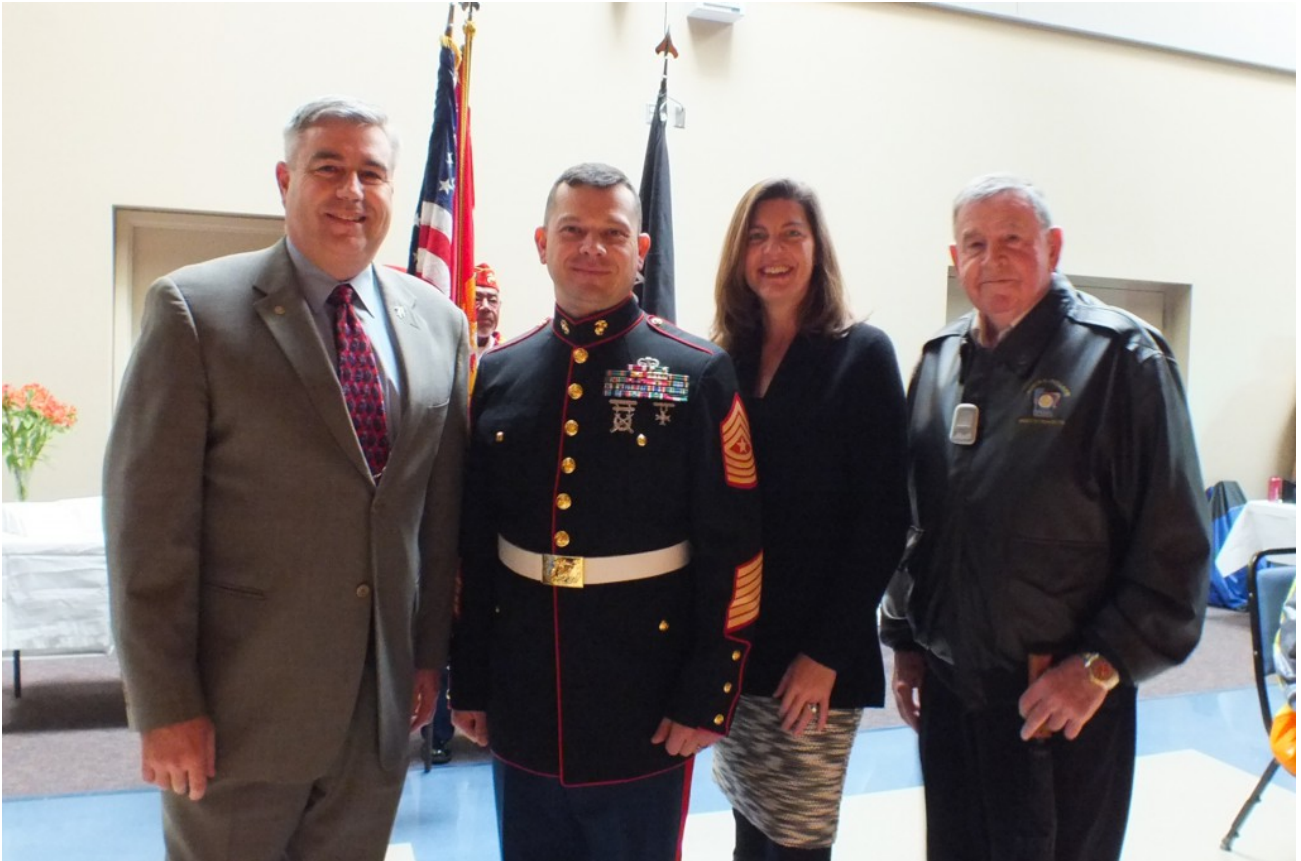
More photos from the event at our Flickr page.

*Video: Clark College/Nick Bremer Korb*

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

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# Gratitude for Those Who Served



Clark College President Bob Knight, U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Eric Sheline, Community Foundation for Southwest Washington President Jennifer Rhoads, and Clark College Trustee Royce Pollard attended the college's Veterans Celebration.

This November, Clark College began a new tradition: a college-sponsored celebration honoring veterans. The event was held the Thursday before Veterans Day in Gaiser Student Center.

"We need to make sure that our veterans are taken care of," said Clark College President Bob Knight in his welcoming address to the event participants. "We're going to have an annual Veterans Day celebration and, one day soon, a Veterans Resource Center here at the college."



Veterans salute the flag during the Posting of the Colors.

That center could become a reality sooner than expected, thanks to an announcement made during the celebration by Community Foundation for Southwest Washington President Jennifer Rhoads. Rhoads announced that, in honor of CFSWW's 30th anniversary, the foundation would be donating six grants of \$30,000 each to different organizations in the region helping to alleviate poverty, and that the first grant would be going to Clark College to create its new Veterans Resource Center. She offered a quote by the writer Cynthia Ozicks: "'We often take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude.'

"Our veterans most deserve our gratitude, today and every day," Rhoads concluded.

Once complete, the center will support veteran students with quality academic and career advising, resource referrals and information regarding military tuition benefits. The center will help expand the services already provided by Clark's Veterans Programs office—services that have led to Clark being named a Military-Friendly School by Victory Media for three years in a row. About 700 veterans enroll at Clark College every quarter; about 500 of them use GI Bill benefits to help pay for tuition, fees, housing, books and supplies.



Clark's Veterans Celebration was a community event, honoring members of every branch of service.

The event was originally planned to begin with a Changing of the Colors at the flagpole outside the Penguin Union Building. However, bad weather canceled that portion of the program. Instead, it began with a Posting of the Colors ceremony inside Gaiser Student Center, after which Clark student Petya Grozeva sang the National Anthem. Guests were also invited to write and sign cards thanking veterans for their service; the cards were delivered to retired and disabled veterans at the Vancouver Veterans Administration Medical Center by members of the Clark College Veterans Club.

Sgt. Maj. Eric Sheline, U.S. Marine Corps, 6th Engineer Support Battalion, gave the keynote speech. Since joining the Marines in 1987, Sheline has participated in operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield; was squad leader of an anti-terrorism team in Mogadishu, Somalia; and was deployed twice to Kuwait in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sheline noted that as the U.S. military continues to draw down forces, more and more veterans will be entering higher education in the coming years. He urged all veterans to continue to be role models, even after they leave the service.

"When we leave [to serve overseas], we do great things," he said. "When we come back, we continue to do great things."

Student Success & Retention Administrative Assistant Susan Muir, who served on the committee that helped organize the event, said the college plans to make the Veterans Celebration an annual tradition. She added that there will be another event on May 22 in recognition of Memorial Day.

*Photos: Clark College/Elizabeth Christopher*

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## Exemplary Citizenship



Bob '50 and Sally '55 Schaefer with Oswald at the Clark County First Citizen ceremony

Clark College alumnus Robert Bob Schaefer 50 has plenty of accomplishments and accolades to his name: former Washington state Speaker of the House, a Fifty-Year Award of Honor from the Washington State Bar Association, 2006 Outstanding Clark Alumnus. On Oct. 1, he added another honor to that list when he was formally named the 2013 Clark County First Citizen.

Schaefer joined a group of 71 other community standouts during a ceremony at the Hilton Vancouver Washington.

Pat Jollota, the 2012 First Citizen, presented this year's award to Schaefer after lauding him as "a very wise person." Others called him a "solutions person" with a gift for bringing people together to improve things in his community.

A video highlighted Schaefer's career, volunteer activities and family life. The presentation touched upon how Schaefer and his wife, Sally, have worked for decades to ensure a brighter future for Southwest Washington. Some of Schaefer's lifelong passions include early learning education; local government leadership; and economic development, particularly the high-tech industry. He was instrumental in establishing Washington State University's Vancouver campus and in creating Paradise Point State Park.

The event had a definite Clark College connection from the beginning—with musical performances by Clark students—to the end, when Schaefer announced he was donating half of his \$1,000 award to Clark College Foundation.

Such generosity has been a hallmark of Schaefer's career. Schaefer, 83, explained to the audience how he and his sister were adopted as children and were raised to help others. He grew up in Clark County, attending Vancouver public schools and Clark College, where he met Sally (Clark College class of 1955, recipient of the 2012 Iris Award, and a First Citizen recipient herself). He later transferred to Willamette University to study law.



Clark College President Bob Knight, *far right*, and SEH Vice President of Operations Ben Bagherpour '75, *far left*, congratulate Bob Schaefer '50, *center*, on his award.

After passing the bar, he got a job with Clark County Prosecutor's Office, while serving in the Army Reserves. He ran for the Washington State Legislature in 1958, spending \$560 on his campaign. He won that election, going on to serve four terms, from 1959 to 1967, and serving as Speaker of the House in his last term.

Reflecting on his past political work, Schaefer bemoaned the lack of compromise and personal relationships between current political parties. "I think it's a sad commentary of our system that these (personal relationships) are not taking place today," he said.

On the day that the federal government partially shut down because of legislative stalemate, he reminded the audience that public officials must compromise: "You just don't get your way," he said. "It has to be worked out, and it has to be in the public interest."

Schaefer wrapped up his remarks with a reminder that Vancouver is a "can-do community."

"My prayer is that each of us can participate in some way to carry out this can-do philosophy for the future," he said.

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley (see more photos on Flickr)*