

New faces joining health care workforce



2021 Medical Assistant graduate Cindi Clark is ready for a new career in healthcare.

Twenty-three Clark College students who earned their degree in Medical Assistant celebrated their achievement with family and friends during a virtual Pinning ceremony on January 20.

For student Candi Clark, the Pinning ceremony was the culmination of longtime family support and inspiration. As a teen, Clark attended the Pinning ceremony for her mother, Rhonda Hansen-Boyle, who earned her nursing degree at Clark College and now works at the Veterans Administration Medical Center.

During the virtual ceremony, Clark was surrounded by her supportive family—her mother, father and sister—to celebrate her graduation. She says her family's support was instrumental to her success as she navigated life's obstacles—including a global pandemic—to earn her degree.

"I've always had a calling to help people," she said. "Once I told my mother I wanted to go into the medical field, my mom

was 100 percent behind me.”

Medical assistants are in demand. Many will join the healthcare workforce in the coming weeks. The Vancouver Clinic hired 19 of the 23 students.

In addition to her supportive family, Clark is thankful for the help and guidance she received from WorkSource, which has partnered with Clark College to help students succeed.

WorkSource uses federal funding through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and provides critical support and services to workers who want to develop the necessary skills for a good job in high-demand fields such as health care services. Available services include tuition assistance, book allowances, uniforms, supplies, and career counseling.

The program is open to a wide variety of adults including those who have been laid off, displaced, or who are under-employed. Low-income adults and veterans also are eligible.

“Our goal is to get people back to work in high-demand occupations that provide stable and meaningful employment to benefit their families and the community,” said Karin LaValla, WorkSource Health Care Liaison. “By partnering with Clark College, we can integrate our services, working together to provide those wrap-around supports to help students succeed.”

LaValla and her team work directly with Dr. Sarah Kuzera, Director of the Medical Assisting Program at Clark College. They attend the orientation for new students and explain their program. In this year’s class, nearly half of the students were eligible for WorkSource services.

“They receive help with tuition, books, transportation, childcare, financial and job coaching,” said Kuzera. “This has been a stressful year for our students. We’re grateful to

have WorkSource at our side as active partners helping our students succeed.”

“WorkSource has been so helpful—a combination coach and fairy godmother,” said Candi Clark. “When I needed help with tuition, supplies—even scrubs—they were there for me. It’s made all the difference in being able to complete my studies.”

WorkSource also helps students find externships and employment. The federal program provides employers up to 50 percent wage reimbursement for a student’s first 30 to 60 days on the job. Candi Clark has already interned at Vancouver Clinic doing patient care and is eager to complete her testing and get to work.

Certified Medical Assistants are in high demand right now, in part because of the pandemic. Medical assistants work directly with physicians and patients in both the clinical and administrative settings. They maintain the daily workflow of a medical office.

“Our graduates are in high demand,” said Kuzera. “Our program is growing.”

The next class, called a cohort, begins spring term; the first day of classes is April 5. Interested students can learn more on the college’s Medical Assisting page.

During the Pinning ceremony—a tradition in many health care programs—the graduates celebrated one another via Zoom. “It’s harder to do basic things, like draw blood, during a pandemic,” said Candi Clark. “But we figured it out and we can be proud of ourselves that we didn’t give up.”



Rhonda Hansen-Boyle, *left*, congratulates her daughter Candi Clark on graduating from the Clark College Medical Assistant program during a virtual pinning ceremony. Hansen-Boyle is an alumnus of the college's Nursing program.

Clark's story came full circle during the Pinning ceremony, when her mother attached the pin to her daughter's shirt. In the family photo taken immediately after the pinning, Clark proudly wears her pin. Her smiling mother is reaching out to touch her daughter's shoulder.

"This is so exciting for me and my family," Clark said. "It's been a long road to get here. I can't wait to get to work. Healthcare is kind of the family business. We gravitate to the helping professions. It's where we can make a difference."

For students interested in learning more about WorkSource Washington and its educational training opportunities for job-seekers can visit WorkSource's website.

New bachelor's degree

announced



On Wednesday, May 23, Clark College received approval from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), the college's regional accrediting body, to begin offering its third baccalaureate program: the Bachelor of Applied Science in Human Services (BASHS).

The BASHS degree program is designed for students who already hold an associate degree in Addiction Counselor Education or a related field, allowing them to advance their careers in the behavioral health professions. Sample courses include Multicultural Counseling in Human Services; Trauma, Grief, and Loss; Practical Family Therapy; and Systems and Social Justice.

Full-time students can complete this 90-credit program in two years. Designed with working professionals in mind, classes are taught in-person two evenings a week, with electives being

offered online. The program also provides all the educational requirements necessary to sit for the Washington Department of Health Chemical Dependency Professional (CDP) exam.

“This degree program answers a need we’ve heard from local employers, who want professionals who are cross-trained in mental health and addiction,” said Dr. Marcia Roi, BASHS Program Director and head of the Addiction Counselor Education department at Clark College. “It also serves the needs of our students, who historically have not had a straightforward pathway to a bachelor’s degree that also meets the educational requirements of the CDP exam.”

The college is currently taking applications for fall 2018, the first term the new degree will be offered. For more information or to apply, contact Marcia Roi at mroi@clark.edu. Information is also available online at www.clark.edu/cc/bashs.

Healthy Penguin Walkabout is back for third year



Clark College welcomes the community to its third annual Healthy Penguin Walkabout on Saturday, June 2, on its main campus. This free, family-friendly event offers a wide range of opportunities for personal health assessments, wellness-related education, and healthy activities.

Activities run 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and will take place both indoors and outside. Guests will begin their visit in Gaiser Hall, where they can register and receive an event passport as early as 9:30 a.m. Gaiser is most easily accessed from the Green 1 and Red 3 parking lots. Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps.

This year's event is organized and volunteer-staffed by Clark College faculty and students from the Business and Health

Sciences Unit, Clark College Athletics, and Child and Family Studies.

Free health assessments and learning activities include:

- Blood glucose levels
- Oral Health and Wellness
- Body mass index (BMI) and body fat percent
- Grip strength and balance
- Diabetes risk level
- Blood pressure and pulse
- Stress reduction strategies
- Sports skills challenge with Clark College athletes
- Children and families connecting with nature
- Medication safety
- See inside an ambulance

Stations on the walkabout will include children's activities, fun souvenirs, healthy snacks, a raffle for both adults and children, as well as additional prizes that include an annual membership to the college's Thompson Fitness Center. Children's activities include a "ninja warrior" obstacle course in the O'Connell Sports Center gymnasium. Guests are also invited to walk a half-mile "Penguin Pathway" through the college's beautiful, 90-acre campus and arboretum. Organizers are also collecting donations of non-perishable food and personal-hygiene items for the college's Penguin Pantry. Guests will receive one extra raffle ticket for every four pantry items they donate.

To learn more about the details of this event, visit www.clark.edu/cc/walkabout.

This event is a part of the college's focus on inter-professional learning for Clark Business and Health Sciences students. "When healthcare disciplines work together, including business, healthcare is more efficient in terms of cost, resources, and time," said Dean of Business and Health

Sciences Brenda Walstead. “The event also increases engagement and learning among Clark College’s students, and provides the community with access to a wealth of information that can lead to healthier outcomes for all individuals.”

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.

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Building a Better Future



Keeley
McConnell '16

You want to know Keeley McConnell’s strategy for success, the thing that’s helped her go from remedial math to high-level medical research? It’s this: Stay focused on the path in front of you. One foot in front of the other. If you can make that next step, you can keep going.

Four years ago, the next step was: Get the kids in the car. Pack everything else in around them. Get the heck out of Dodge

before your ex comes back.

Eighty miles later, McConnell and her three children arrived at a shelter for victims of domestic violence. She'd left her job, her home. She had no idea how she would support her family on the money she earned as a medical assistant. But one thing at a time. Find a place to live, get some stability.

It was only three months later, when McConnell had moved her family into an apartment, that she considered college. "When I was in high school, I never thought about college as an option," she says. "I'd taken one class when I was pregnant with my son, but I tested into the lowest level of math they had and I thought, 'Oh my goodness, this is going to take forever!'"

However, a friend encouraged McConnell to come with her to apply to Clark College. Just as she'd feared, McConnell tested into DVED 21, the lowest-level math course offered at the time. But one thing at a time. Keep your eyes on the path.

McConnell's other strategy has been listening to advice from friends, family, and mentors. When an instructor suggested she enroll in Clark's Math Academy program, McConnell signed up. This yearlong program pairs standard classroom time with dedicated math labs, where students get extra help understanding difficult concepts. McConnell describes it as "the key to my success in math."



Keeley McConnell helping a

student in Clark College's
STEM Tutoring Center.

By the time McConnell finished her last Math Academy class, not only was she prepared to enter college-level math courses—she'd been recommended to become a math tutor herself. The experience helped boost her confidence and gave her the tools she needed to continue pursuing her dream of becoming a physician's assistant.

That goal would require her to spend two more years at Clark to earn an associate degree, plus another two at a four-year institution to complete a bachelor's, followed by at least two years of medical school. *But*. One foot in front of the other. Stay focused on the path in front of you.

McConnell continued to thrive at Clark, finding she enjoyed the intellectual challenge of biology coursework. And once again, a mentor stepped in to change the course of her life. When biology chair Dr. Travis Kibota first approached her about applying to the BUILD EXIT0 Scholar Program, she was skeptical. Run by Portland State University in partnership with Oregon Health Sciences University, and with funding provided by the National Institutes of Health, the program helps undergraduates from diverse backgrounds become successful in health research careers.

"I was hesitant at first, because I wasn't originally interested in going into research," McConnell says. "But it's been the most amazing opportunity."

Through her participation in BUILD EXIT0, McConnell joined a cohort of students from community colleges in the region who formed a Research Learning Community. Within that RLC, she could learn about careers in research, develop skills, and connect with mentors. She also had a built-in social network to help her make the adjustment to a four-year institution after she graduated from Clark in spring 2016.

“If I had had to do all this without EXIT0, I would have been really overwhelmed,” she says. “I knew everyone at Clark—staff, faculty, students. PSU was huge. But the EXIT0 staff have been there for me—you can go in and ask them anything.”

Now a junior in her second semester at PSU, McConnell is deeply immersed in research in her chosen field of trauma medicine; she’ll even see her name on some upcoming research papers, a big boost to career advancement in the research world. “I work with the Chief of Trauma at OHSU,” she says proudly. “I wear a pager; when a call comes in, I’m there, collecting data and samples.”

McConnell says it was overwhelming when she first walked into OHSU. “I looked up and thought, ‘I’m so close. I’m literally standing in the building I want to have my future in. It’s what I’ve been waiting for my whole life.’”



Keeley McConnell, *left*, celebrates graduation from Clark College in 2016 with a friend.

She still faces challenges. While BUILD EXIT0 students receive a stipend that significantly eases the financial burden of being a college student, McConnell still works 30 hours a week outside of school to support herself and her three children, now ages 8, 9 and 18. And she struggles to find time to be

present for her children as a mom.

“It’s probably my biggest challenge right now,” she says. “But they’re great, they’re my little drivers. I want them to have something better. They need to see that, when you want something and you work really hard at for it, you can get it.”

McConnell brought her son with her earlier this year when she was invited to the Washington State Association of College Trustees’ Transforming Lives Awards banquet, where they sat between Clark College President Bob Knight and two state senators. “I wanted him to experience that,” she says. “But once we were there, I realized how big a deal this was for me, too. With me, I get so focused on the road ahead, I don’t spend much time thinking about the big picture. It made me realize, ‘Oh, gosh, I guess I have come a long way.’ And, you know, my kids and I—we’re still moving forward.”

Are you a student interested in participating in BUILD EXIT0? The application deadline for the 2017-2018 year is February 28, and there is a free application help session on Friday, February 24, 10 a.m. – 11:50 a.m., in SHL 124.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

A New Prescription for

Success



Clark College President Robert K. Knight and Columbia Credit Union President Steve Kenny cut the ribbon signifying the official opening of the simulation pharmacy.

More than 40 people gathered at Clark College at the Washington State University campus in Vancouver on September 30 for a ribbon-cutting event for the Columbia Credit Union Simulation Pharmacy. The celebration honored the community credit union for its \$65,000 gift that led to remodeling the 500-square-foot pharmacy and purchasing new lab equipment and supplies.



The crowd cheered as the ribbon was cut on Clark's new Columbia Credit Union Simulation Pharmacy.

Clark's Pharmacy Technician program relocated to Clark College's building on the WSUV campus last year, in the process expanding the program's footprint and enhancing the college's quest to be the premier Pharmacy Technician program in the region. The new lab allows students to practice skills and simulate activities they will encounter on the job in pharmacy settings, such as setting up sterile IV bags and packaging medications.

Clark College President Robert K. Knight and Columbia Credit Union President Steve Kenny cut the ribbon signifying the official opening of the simulation pharmacy.

"We appreciate our community partners that bring that margin of excellence to Clark College," said Knight, adding, "Columbia Credit Union is a partner we can always count on."

Kenny said the bank has served the community since 1952. "We are proud to support higher education," he said.

Kenny added a personal story about his son, a Clark alumnus, who began as a Running Start student, enrolled in a medical program at Clark, and is now a licensed X-ray technician "who, at 26, just purchased his first home," he said. "Education truly makes a difference."



Pharmacy Technician student Dixie Fisher gave a tour of the simulation pharmacy following the ribbon cutting.

Pharmacy Technician student Dixie Fisher is excited about the way education is reshaping her life. Fisher, who was on hand to give tours of the new simulation pharmacy, shared her own story with visitors. A year ago, she was a stay-at-home mom with six children when a storm flooded her home and forced her family to take shelter in a hotel for eight months. With time on her hands and her job prospects bleak, Fisher visited Clark College; she'd heard about its Pharmacy Technician program and wanted to learn more. Now Fisher, 36, is in the last quarter of the program and hopes to get a job at Kaiser Permanente, where she's been interning, and perhaps return to Clark one day to teach in the program.

Pharmacy technicians are in high demand because of the large number of locations that employ technicians and an aging population who require care. In the state of Washington, more than 1.2 million residents will be age 65 or older by 2020, according to a panel convened by the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council.



Pharmacy Tech instructor Heidi Fey and department head Dawn Shults attend the opening of the new Columbia Credit Union simulation pharmacy.

Sixteen states in the nation require certification for pharmacy technicians, and only six require licenses. Washington is one of the six that mandates a license, says Dawn Shults, Pharmacy Technician Department head.

Clark students can earn a certificate and be workforce-ready in a year or go on to earn an Associate in Applied Technology degree that prepares them for leadership roles within a pharmacy setting. They can transfer to Central Washington University for a Bachelor of Applied Technology degree in business management.

To see more photos from the event visit our Flickr site.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

New agreement's a HIIT



HIIT student Rachel Cribben says the ability to pursue a bachelor's degree without leaving her home in Vancouver is "extremely important" to her success in the program.

In a move that will provide residents of Southwest Washington with the opportunity to train for high-paying jobs in a rapidly expanding field, Clark College and Bellevue College have signed an articulation agreement that allows students at Clark to earn a bachelor's degree in Health Informatics Information Technology (HIIT) from Bellevue through online and remote classes—without leaving the Clark College campus.

"In our ongoing conversations with regional employers, we realized there was a need for Health Informatics Information Technology professionals and responded quickly to that need, but we also realized that there would be a need for students to take their education to the next level," said Debra Ortiz,

director of allied health programs at Clark College. "This is a great opportunity for students to stay here in the region and get a bachelor's degree in a rapidly growing field."

Health Informatics is the science of managing electronic health records and coordinating the computer information systems used by hospitals, clinics, insurance companies, and health care professionals. HIIT professionals work in customizing software for large health care institutions, as well as in data analysis, training clinicians on how to use computer systems, database management, and many other related fields. Demand for these skilled professionals is increasing as more and more health care organizations switch to electronic records-keeping, and as the graying Baby Boomers spur an increase in demand for health care. Indeed, the Bureau for Labor Statistics predicts that demand for HIIT specialists will increase by 21 percent between 2010 and 2020—a rate that's 50 percent higher than average job growth in all fields.

Clark introduced its HIIT program in winter 2012 in response to regional workforce needs. From the beginning, the program was designed to allow graduates to transfer to four-year institutions, including the Oregon Institute of Technology. However, this new agreement with Bellevue College allows students to continue paying in-state tuition while pursuing their Bachelor of Science degree; because the classes are offered online or remotely, the agreement also allows students to complete their four-year degree without leaving Vancouver.

"We're thrilled to have this opportunity to collaborate with our colleagues at Clark so that we can offer students convenient access to our online courses," said Dr. Pamela Charney, program chair of Healthcare Information Technology & Management at Bellevue. "This will give students from Clark a clear pathway to professional success in the exciting new arena of healthcare IT."

Rachel Cribben is one of those students. Cribben, 27, earned a certificate for medical billing and coding shortly after graduating from high school. But after she and her husband separated in 2011, she realized that she would need to get a degree to be able to support her two daughters, ages 3 and 5. Her mother, who works at Clark, told her about the HIIT program.

Cribben says HIIT is a good fit for her personality and interests. "I like the healthcare field, but I'm more of a behind-the-scenes kind of person," she says, adding that she hopes to find a job in a hospital's information technology department and eventually manage her own team of specialists there.

Cribben says the material has at times been challenging. "I'm taking Intro to Local Area Networks right now, and I opened up the textbook and saw all these pictures of wires and diagrams and thought, 'How am I going to learn this?'" she says. "But then I saw a picture of a [network interface card] and I recognized it from when my brother built my computer. I realized I actually knew what it was already, and it made me think, 'OK, I can do this.'"

Cribben plans to earn her associate degree from Clark in 2016 and her bachelor's degree through the Bellevue partnership a year after that. For her, the ability to be able to complete her degree without relocating—and primarily through online classes, so that she can continue to care for her children while being a full-time student—is crucial to her success in the program.

"It's extremely important," she says. "I want to do this, and I want to do it well. I want to show my girls that you can do anything that you put your mind to."

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley