

# **Veterans Career & Resource Fair**

Clark College's Veterans Center of Excellence partnered with Congresswoman Marie Gluesenkamp Perez for the VCOE's first Veterans Career and Resource Fair on November 7.

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## **Clark College honors Vietnam War veterans by dedicating Witness Tree**

More than 100 Vietnam War veterans, families and supporters gathered at Clark College on March 29 to dedicate a Witness Tree commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

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## **Veterans Resource Center receives grant**



The Veterans Resource Center at Clark College received a \$449,460 federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education to establish a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CEVSS) over three years. Clark is one of only two community colleges in the state to receive the grant. Focused on supporting veteran student success, the Center will provide a single point of contact to coordinate comprehensive, individualized support services that address the academic, financial, physical, and social needs of Clark College's 600 student-veterans.

Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Michele Cruse said, "We are grateful to receive grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education to support our Veterans Resource Center. This grant comes at a critical time when the needs of our military-connected students continue to outpace our available resources. This grant will allow our Veterans Resource Center to expand its offerings."

To better support student veterans, Clark College will establish a cross-departmental team with representatives from every office that works with student veterans, including

Admissions, Financial Aid, the Counseling and Health Center, and Career Services—to name just a few.

Additionally, the grant will pay for a full-time student success coach; half of a full-time program coordinator position; a part-time tutoring position; outreach and recruitment activities; disability accommodations such as Live Scribe pens; and essentials including housing and food supports for student veterans.

Associate Director of Veterans Services Dave Daly said, “Because of this grant, the Center will now have the ability to help today’s warriors not only to transition from the service, but also to be more successful in staying in school and completing their path in higher education. Our goal is for our student veterans to bring their deeper, world perspective not only to Clark College, but also as graduates who are productive, insightful members of the greater community.”

U.S. Senator Patty Murray announced the grant award from the U.S. Department of Education and called it a vital investment in Washington state’s veterans.

Senator Murray said, “I’m glad to see this federal award going towards helping veterans in Washington state as they pursue an education and I appreciate Clark College’s efforts to help those who have served our country. As a proud partner of our state’s veterans and educators, I will continue working to ensure they have the resources they need to succeed and thrive.”

Senator Murray is the incoming chair of the Senate education committee, serves on the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, and is a steadfast advocate for veterans and their families.

### **About Clark College**

Founded in 1933, Clark College provides residents of Southwest

Washington with affordable, high-quality academic and technical education. It is a public community college offering more than 100 degree and certificate programs, including bachelor's and associate degrees; professional certificates; high school diplomas and GED preparation; and non-credit community and continuing education. Clark serves a wide range of students including high school students, displaced workers, veterans, parents, non-native English speakers, and mature learners. Approximately three-quarters of its students are in the first generation of their families to attend college.

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## Clark College named Best for Vets



Clark College employees serve cake at the opening of the Veterans Resource Center in 2014.

Clark College has been named a 2020 Best for Vets college in the Career and Technical College category by *Military Times*.

For 10 years, *Military Times* has conducted an extensive,

editorially independent, objective study evaluating the many factors that help make colleges and universities a good fit for service members, military veterans, and their families. The final rankings for 2020 can be found here. More details about the rankings can be found on [militarytimes.com](http://militarytimes.com).

"This is the third year in a row that Clark College has been recognized as a Best for Vets college," said Clark College Veterans Resource Center Interim Manager Dave Daly. "I think it speaks to the systems we've built to support our student veterans and ensure that they are successful in their transition from military to academic life."

Opened in 2014, the Veterans Resource Center offers student veterans a wide range of services and resources, from free tutoring to help accessing GI Bill benefits. The space includes couches for socializing with fellow veterans, computer labs, shelves and racks of free textbooks and clothing, and staff who can help connect student veterans with resources or just listen to their experiences without judgment. Additionally, the center has partnered with Clark College Dental Hygiene and the American Legion Post 176 to provide subsidized dental care to student veterans.

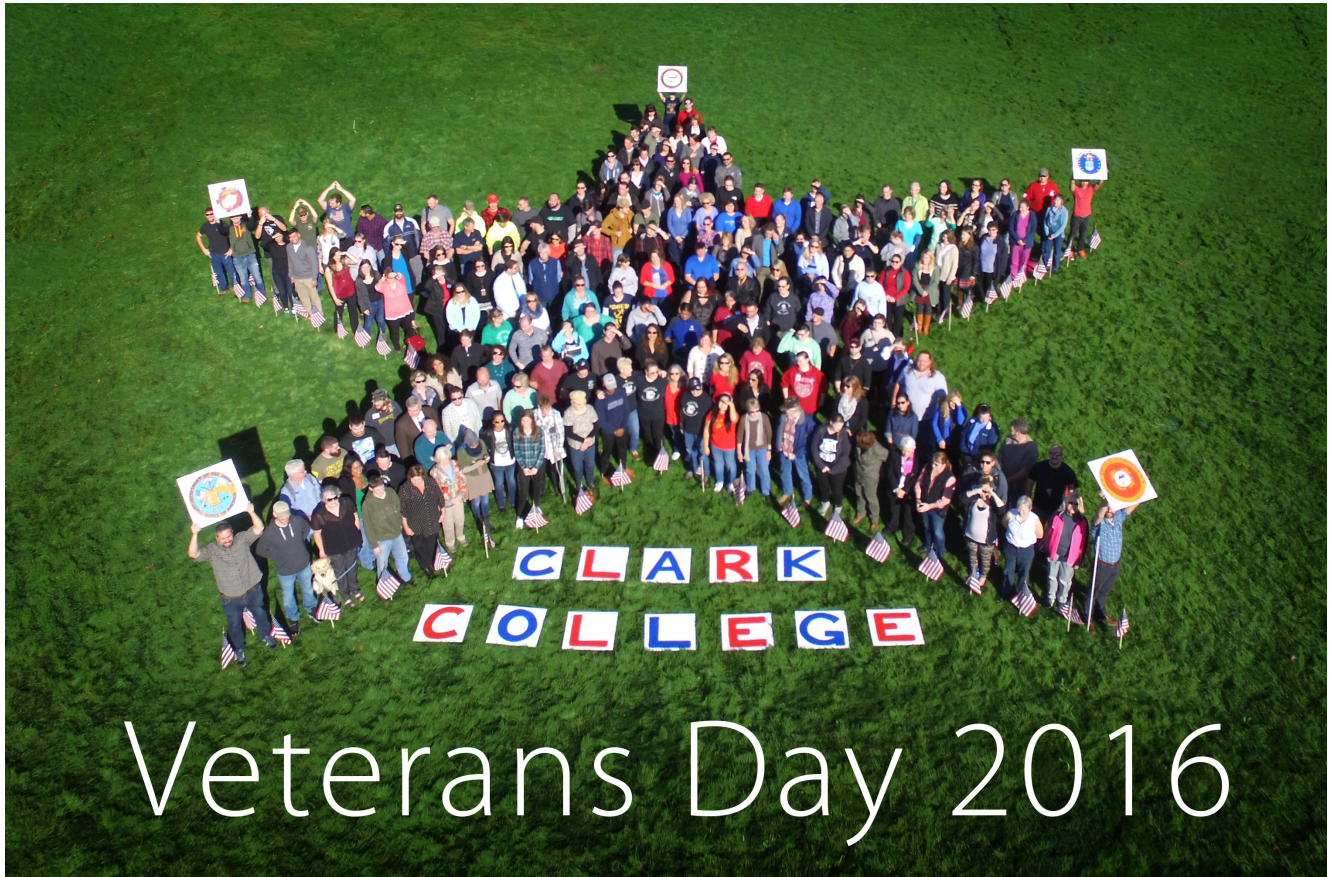
Currently, 304 Clark College students identify as veterans.

*Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*



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# Giving vets a starring role



Clark staff, faculty, and students participated in a special Veterans Day photo on Nov. 10, 2016.

The Veterans Resource Center would like to thank everyone who participated in our Veterans Day photo on November 10. As you can see from the image, it was a huge success. We hope to grow this annual celebration so veterans in our community know how much we appreciate their service. Thank you for all you do for our veteran community.

*This photo and article submitted by Kelly Jones.*

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# Jessica Lynch to speak at Commencement



Pfc. Jessica Lynch will address Clark College's Class of 2016. Lynch was taken prisoner during the Iraq war and was held for over a week before being rescued by U.S. Special Forces. REUTERS/Blake Sell

Former prisoner of war Jessica Lynch will share her experiences overcoming obstacles and her belief in the important role of education with the Clark College Class of 2016 as the college's Commencement keynote speaker on June 16.

"Jessica Lynch is a wonderful example of how strength of character can help people survive the hardest of situations,"

said Clark College President Robert K. Knight. "I believe she will make a strong connection with our students."

Clark College's Commencement ceremony is scheduled to be held on the evening of June 16 in Sunlight Supply Amphitheater. Tickets are not required to attend.

### **About Jessica Lynch**



Jessica Lynch is a former Private First Class (PFC) in the United States Army and a former prisoner of war. On March 23, 2003, she was injured and captured by Iraqi forces after her unit was ambushed in Iraq. She was rescued after nine days in captivity on April 1, 2003, by U.S. special operations forces. Lynch's rescue was the first successful rescue of an American POW since World War II.

Today, Lynch speaks to various groups around the United States about overcoming her obstacles and how perseverance helped her survive. Lynch further explains that despite the most difficult circumstances – whatever they might be – a positive outlook and determination can truly help individuals live fulfilling lives and accomplish their goals.

Lynch has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education and a Master of Arts degree in Communication Studies. In 2014, she toured the U.S. promoting *Virtuous*, a faith-based movie by JC Films. She recently filmed her second faith-based movie titled *One Church* and will be filming her third movie in March 2015.

Lynch has appeared on *Good Morning America*, *Today Show*, *CBS Morning Show*, *Huckabee Show*, CNN, MSNBC, *David Letterman Show*, Fox, *Prime Time on ABC with Dianne Sawyer*, E News!, CBN, and various local networks throughout the country. She has appeared on the cover of numerous magazines such as *TIME* and *People*. She has been named West Virginian of the



Year as well as *Glamour's* Woman of the Year.

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## Clark College Honors Memorial Day



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](http://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.

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## **Student Club Prepares for Veterans Day**



Clark College Veterans Club member Steve Mitchley hangs a ribbon from the Honor Tree that will be displayed during this year's Veterans Day celebration.

Members of the Clark College Veterans Club and Associated Students are staffing a table outside of Gaiser Student Center from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. all week in advance of the college's Veterans Day celebration on November 10. Members of the college community are invited to write holiday cards to be sent to members of the military serving overseas. They can also add ribbons to an Honor Tree that will be displayed during Monday's celebration.



Ribbons are color-coded.

- **White ribbon:** in memory of a loved one who gave/lost their life in service
- **Blue ribbon:** in honor of a loved one who is serving
- **Red ribbon:** you are currently serving or have served
- **Yellow ribbon:** general support and thanks to all veterans and service members
- **Black ribbon:** in recognition of someone who was a POW/MIA
- **Purple ribbon:** in honor of Purple Heart recipients



A Clark College student hangs a ribbon on the Honor Tree and fills out a holiday card to be sent to a servicemember overseas.

This is the second year that the college is hosting a Veterans Day celebration. Last year, the event included the presentation of a grant from the Community Foundation for

Southwest Washington that helped start and staff the college's Veterans Resource Center, which opened earlier this year.

The college is always closed on Veterans Day, so each year the celebration takes place on the day before or after the official holiday. This year's Veterans Day celebration takes place 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. in Gaiser Student Center. In addition to the honor tree and card-writing station, it will include a Presentation of the Colors, guest speakers, free food and refreshments, and kid-friendly activities. It is open to the all members of the Clark College community, regardless of military status, and to the greater Southwest Washington community as well.

*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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# Creating a Home for Student Veterans



Members of the Clark College Veterans Club and Associated Students were on hand to welcome student veterans to the new Veterans Resource Center. Also pictured are Vet Corps Navigators (and VCAS advisors) Tim McPharlin, *far left*, and Josh Vance, *far right*.

Less than four months after the college announced a major grant to help create a Veterans Resource Center, that center



held its first public event to welcome student veterans and other members of the college community.

“This is a major milestone for the campus community as we pull together all the resources we have for veterans for their personal, financial, and educational success,” said Dean of Student Success & Retention Matthew Rygg as he greeted guests to the center’s open house, held March 11.



Clark College Bob Knight called the opening of the Veterans Resource Center “a proud day for Clark College.”

“As a vet myself, it is a proud day for Clark College to be opening a resource center for our student veterans,” said Clark College President Bob Knight, who served more than two decades in the U.S. Army. “To have a space where they can sit and meet with each other and get help and counseling is just a little of what we can do and should do for our veterans.”

Vice President of Student Affairs Bill Belden spoke in gratitude of the donors who had made the center possible. These include Jane Hagelstein, a longtime supporter of Clark’s student veteran community who donated \$48,000 to help construct and furnish the center; the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington, which donated \$30,000 in November to help hire and train staff at the center; and other individual

donors who wish to remain anonymous. Belden also thanked Clark College Foundation for its support in making the center a reality.

Tucked into a quiet corner of Gaiser Hall's second floor, the center is not yet complete—there is more furniture and decor in the works, and the college is still in the process of hiring a staff person to run it. But already it offers student veterans a host of amenities. A comfortable couch sits near a bank of computers available for research and paper-writing; private offices allow student veterans to discuss their educational and personal needs in confidentiality. An American flag stands by the doorway.



Clark College Veterans Club and Associated Students president Megan O'Malley thanks Jane Hagelstein, whose donation helped make the Veterans Resource Center possible.

"For me personally, a lot of it is just having that quiet space that [veterans] can come to where they don't have to fight for a computer and where they can feel comfortable," said Megan O'Malley, who is currently serving in the Army National Guard and is president of the Clark College Veterans Club and Associated Students.



About 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. They often face unique challenges when they enter college—everything from managing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to navigating the sometimes complex paperwork involved in accessing military benefits. And then there are the not-so-unique challenges, like time management and financial instability. The Veterans Resource Center provides veterans with guidance and help for all of those things in one welcoming, centralized location.

“It’s our way of extending a helping hand to our vets and showing that the community they experienced while in the military is still available to them now that they’re out,” said Clark student Josh Vance. Vance, who served 10 years in the Air Force, now works as one of two Vet Corps Navigators in the center, helping veterans connect with services both inside and outside the college. Additionally, the center houses two full-time staff members who previously worked in the Office of Financial Aid; they are charged with helping veterans (as well as their qualifying dependents) access, understand, and comply with their GI Bill benefits. Six work-study employees also work in the center, supporting the staff and helping student veterans with questions. All the center’s work-study students and most of its staff are veterans or active service members themselves, helping to create a comfortable and supportive environment for student veterans.



Student veteran Killian

Hough and her service dog, Chekov, visit with Veterans Affairs Program Manager Michael Gibson at the Veterans Resource Center open house.

Killian Hough, a quiet woman whose service dog bears a sergeant's stripes, came to check out the center after reading about it in her student email. She said she would return, and thought the center was a good step toward serving veterans at the college. "It shows that they're considering veterans, having a place where we can have our thoughts, separate from all the kids," said Hough, who served in the Air Force during Operation Desert Storm and currently serves in the Army National Guard. "A lot of us, both young and old, we've been through a lot, and sometimes we kind of think differently."

The Veterans Resource Center is located in Gaiser Hall room 216. Its current hours during the regular academic year are 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. on Friday. Hours are reduced during breaks in the academic year. Certifying officials are available 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The center's main phone line is 360-992-2073.

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley. For more photos from this event, visit our Flickr set.*