

# Kerani Mitchell gives back to her hometown

By **Katy Yoder**  
Correspondent

Kerani Mitchell was honored at the Accomplished Under 40 awards ceremony at the High Desert Museum last week. Sponsored by *Cascade Business News*, the evening featured 24 young achievers from the education, social service and corporate realm. The recipients were recognized for their work in community service and professional accomplishments in Central Oregon.

Mitchell graduated from Sister High School in 2004 and went on to receive a Sullivan Leadership Award which covered her college expenses at Seattle University. She received a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies and Spanish. After graduation, Mitchell did program management work for nonprofits in the Seattle area.

In 2014, Mitchell returned to Central Oregon after accepting a position with Sisters Folk Festival as the volunteer coordinator and program manager. She also helped start the Bend

International School and serves on the board where her son attends school.

"I take being a mother very seriously and know how important it is to live out my values and be a good role model," said Mitchell.

In addition to her work at Sisters Folk Festival, her latest endeavor is working for the Portland nonprofit Oregon Humanities as a facilitator for their Conversation Project. In that role, Mitchell will facilitate discussions across Oregon about Oregon identity, race and sense of community.

"The beauty of the Conversation Project is it brings people together from all walks of life and backgrounds to explore our differences and honor our commonalities. It's done in an effort to build community," she said.

After living in many cities and traveling the world, Mitchell saw the value in dialogue about difference.

"Rather than being afraid to talk about difficult topics these conversations help us share stories, honor our uniqueness and explore what

makes us Oregonians," she said.

She acknowledged the support of many in her work.

"It was an honor to be recognized as a distinguished community member; however none of the work I do would be possible without the support of friends, family and community members who've encouraged me to stay engaged and part of positive change in Oregon."

Since Mitchell relocated to her hometown, she has volunteered as an ASPIRE mentor. Her efforts are meant to pay back those who helped her when she was a student in Sisters.

"Part of the reason I volunteer with ASPIRE is because I see so many students funneled into a cookie-cutter model of success," she said. "By being a mentor my hope is to encourage students to be themselves and stay true to their values. That's how they'll find their niche."

For Mitchell, the unique programs in Sisters have real value.

"There's no one way to



PHOTO PROVIDED

Kerani Mitchell works for Sisters Folk Festival, Inc.

find success, and no one model that fits all. The students don't have to be like everyone else to be successful. They can capitalize on their unique talents and still make it. Students need an adult that can recognize the value in their unique skill-sets, or at least someone who can introduce them to different avenues to achieve their goals."

To learn more about the Conversation Project or to

participate in future discussions contact Mitchell at [Kerani.mitchell@gmail.com](mailto:Kerani.mitchell@gmail.com).

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