

Jacquie Fitch battles breast cancer bravely

LAURA ARMSTRONG
Staff Writer

"Everybody needs to live one day at a time and to appreciate what they have," advises the amazingly strong voice of Jacquie Fitch, "because they never know when it's going to be taken away."

For Fitch, a 1991 graduate of Clackamas, everyday things are becoming more precious. The faces of her husband, Wally, and 22-month-old son, Cooper, are things Fitch doesn't take for granted. Diagnosed with breast cancer on Oct. 14, Fitch began the battle to stay alive. An aggressive form of cancer called infiltrating ductal carcinoma was found in the 27-year-old's breast.

Fitch has undergone several steps of treatment to end

her cancer. A double mastectomy took place eight days after Fitch's diagnosis of breast cancer. Chemotherapy followed. And Fitch recently finished a bone marrow transplant and is now awaiting radiation, which is the last step in the series of treatments.

The treatments have taken their toll on Fitch physically. "I'm real tired. I just got a new immune system," she said. But her attitude is clearly positive. "Everyday gets better. This is what I have to do to get better. I don't really have any other choice but to be positive."

Paul Fiskum, health and PE instructor, and head softball coach of Clackamas, had only good words for Fitch.

"Her attitude throughout this whole thing has been remarkable. She's been very, very positive. She says she's going to battle cancer and do everything to be around with her son and family."

Fiskum had the opportunity to be acquainted with Fitch while she was a part of the Clackamas softball team. In the school years of 1989-91, Fitch was an outstanding student athlete—she was named the female scholar athlete in 1991. Fitch was also recognized by NWAACC for her outstanding skills as a softball player. Always a participant in softball, Fitch made her way from player to assistant coach at Clackamas.

"Jacquie has been involved ongoing since her playing days. Her schedule afforded her the time to be come back and be an assistant softball coach," said Fiskum. "She also helped with big community softball activities, kid softball camps and high school hitting clinics. She's continued to help even after her assistant coaching days."

A part of Fiskum's coaching philosophy is to value teammates as friends. Fitch easily adapted to that idea.

"I met a lot of my best friends [at Clackamas]," she said. "Now, they've become my life-long friends, including Paul." These friends are among the many that have helped support Fitch tremendously throughout her battle with cancer.

When Fitch left Clackamas with her Oregon transfer degree, she followed her heart to Western Oregon State College, now Western Oregon University, where she pursued her dream to become an elementary education teacher. She also met her husband there.

Searching for a teaching career, Fitch found her way back to the Clackamas County area. Substitute teacher positions and a kindergarten teacher-assistant job kept Fitch at Carus Elementary School for two years. Moving into a more life-long career, Fitch found a full-time first- and second-grade teaching position at John Wetten Elementary School in Gladstone.

Reflecting on the choices that she has made in her life, Fitch quickly said that coming to Clackamas for initial schooling was the best decision in her career. This is what led her into teaching, she said.

Now that the majority of treatments for Fitch's cancer has taken place, Fitch is making plans for the future.

"I hope to go back to John Wetten," said Fitch. Another more light-hearted plan is to "take my son to Disneyland. That plan was my light at the end of the tunnel." The Fitch family plans on making the Disneyland venture in the fall of this year.

Those who want to help the Fitch family can stop by any U.S. Bank and make donations to the Jacquie Fitch account. Donations can also be sent to her at P.O. Box 565, Wilsonville, OR, 97070.

Fitch's high-spirited outlook is one of admirable quality. "I want to live to be 100. That's always been my goal," she said matter-of-factly. With her attitude, Jacquie Fitch just might make her dream come true.



TIMOTHY BELL / Clackamas Print

In a moment of peace, Jacquie Fitch tends to her botanical friends. Her cancer bout is an ordeal, but she is undaunted.

A civic gospel: Political Science gets serious

JOEL P. SHEMPERT
Feature Editor

“
You're going to get a scientific analysis of the present state of American politics, and it's not a happy story.
”

Dean Darris
Political Science
Instructor

The Political Science department is somewhat of an unsung hero—extolled by students who have taken courses in that field, but little-known to the rest of the student body. There could be several reasons for this, but one reason may be that the diverse and comprehensive program rests largely on the shoulders of one man: Political Science Instructor Dean Darris.

Darris, who has been teaching full time at Clackamas for approximately four years, is a bit unconventional in approach, but he is far from unqualified; he possesses a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science, a Master's in Political Theory and Public Law, and a Doctorate in Government. He has brought an expansive vision to Political Science at Clackamas.

"Political Science really covers diverse disciplines, such as International Relations, Comparative Politics, American Government, Political Theory, and Public Law," Darris explains.

Darris, then, fits the bill quite well with his diverse training. "I think one of the reasons I was hired was because of my versatility," he concludes.

Students, therefore, can expect an education in each of the above fields within the array of Political Science classes Darris teaches. The complete package of US Government: National Political Process, US Government Institutions, State and Local Government, and International Relations touches on the many disciplines that Political Science entails. Stuart King's Model UN class rounds out the group with further forays into International Relations and International Law.

Furthermore, Darris stresses that stu-

dents entering his classes can expect "intellectual challenge. I require students to think for themselves, and that means having opinions and backing them up with reasons." Darris' usual technique is to challenge students directly in class so that they can hone their persuasive skills and defend their position. Critical thought is always encouraged.

"I see myself as kind of a civic missionary preaching the gospel of self-government," claims Darris, "So you're going to get a very Jeffersonian approach to politics."

"It is my opinion as an American government scholar that Jefferson's philosophy—that government is there to pursue the interest of all Americans—has been lost in the the Democratic and Republican parties, which always serve, under scientific analysis, the wealthy few."

If this sounds pessimistic, it isn't because Darris is down on America, but rather concerned about injustice toward Americans. And he truly believes, as Jefferson did, that before we can change our present situation, we must be educated, and that's where his classes enter the picture.

"You're going to get a scientific analysis of the present state of American politics," says Darris, "and it's not a happy story."

Darris is deeply concerned about the condition of our nation, and he traces the roots of the problem back to education.

"How many Americans can name three things a Senator has actually done?" he asks. "How many of us can name the Secretary of the Treasury? How many of us can name two things the Secretary of the Treasury has actually done? But I'll guarantee you we know the President's pets' names."

This is important because America,

once a republic, is now in many ways a democracy. The masses run the country. This fact is powerful and perhaps even a little frightening.

"No democracy has ever lasted in history," Darris expounds. "As James Madison said, 'they are as short in their lives as they are violent in their deaths,' and here's why: we tend to get the privilege of voting too easily...there's no educational concept. And so what happens is, too many citizens in a democracy—and America is no exception—assume that because they have the throne, they have political educations."

Darris is committed to providing the education that is so lacking in today's voting public, and has even written his own textbook, *American Democracy: Promise and Betrayal*, to this purpose.

"What motivated me to write the text was two issues," says Darris. "One was the cost of textbooks...and at the same time, the expensive texts tended to focus on the process of government rather than the effect of politics."

Darris, in both his text and his classes, has set out to focus on the latter con-

cept. Government affects the lives of citizens, and therefore Darris believes that citizens should be informed. That is his aim for students in his classes. And in this area Darris is at his most optimistic.

"I think it's a grave injustice to those students who are informed," says Darris, "to stereotype all students as ignorant. For what it's worth, this year's students are the best I've had."

Dean Darris feels passionately that his work here is the fulfillment of a civic mission. And he wouldn't trade it for anything (He has had both a legal career and government office within his grasp.) He believes that political science matters.

"The question I always get is, 'What's the practical value of all this?' And I can on a superficial level say, 'well, you can save quadrillions of dollars by understanding the tax code,'" he jokes. Yet in all seriousness, he continues, "but on a much deeper level, we can change the world and bring justice to it. I can't think of anything more practical than that."

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