

Female automotive student first to graduate in 13 years

MAGGIE JIRASEK
Feature Editor

Marbella Red Thunder is the first female automotive student to graduate at Clackamas in 13 years.

Every year, usually only men participate in the auto mechanics program, but Red Thunder took on the challenge anyway and joined them.

"I felt like a dinosaur in today's world," she said. "Everybody stares at you. People don't believe me when I tell them that I'm a female auto mechanic."

Before coming to Clackamas, Red Thunder worked as supervisor for UPS for 10 years before deciding that it was not what she wanted to do for the rest of her life.

"When I was 13 years old, I changed oil on cars and I really enjoyed that. I liked my old job at UPS but it turned out that if I looked inside myself, my heart was right here, in the hood of an engine," said Red Thunder.

Unwilling to deal with the obstacles of being a female in the automotive industry, Red Thunder waited until she reached an age where she was ready to start a family and follow her dreams. By joining Clackamas' automotive program, she could finally do what she enjoyed the most. Red

Thunder enrolled at Clackamas in 1998 when she was 3 months pregnant.

"Being an auto mechanic is not just something you decide to do, it's something you are born with and you just follow it. To me, it's like a stress reliever and I love my job," she said.

Determined to achieve her goal of becoming an auto mechanic and hoping to one day own her own shop, Red Thunder finished the program, although many times she almost quit.

"It was very tough. I quit every Monday for some time but decided to come back," she said. "It is mostly the personalities I come up against. One time a 65-year-old man dropped his car off and he exclusively said that he did not want me to work on it."

Knowing the obstacles that come along with being the only female among 20 men, Red Thunder saw many women enroll in the automotive program only to drop out during the first week of school.

"It's very hard to be the only female. People aren't looking at you as a auto mechanic; they don't look at your skills," explained Red Thunder. "It's not that women don't enroll — it's the stigma that comes with it."

When I was pregnant, I had to reach over my eight month protruding belly to drop a four liter engine in a Jeep Cherokee all by myself because my female partner quit the first week of school."

As a student at Clackamas, Red Thunder was given a lot of support from family, instructors and a counselor who helped her learn to manage stress.

"I believe we had the very best electronics teacher and that was Ray Conklin. He is probably the only reason I didn't go with quitting every Monday. He was very supportive," said Red Thunder.

According to Dan Flanagan with ASE (Automotive Service Excellence), women are more and more welcome in the automotive industry.

"I am for women in automotive. In my opinion, the biggest obstacles are women themselves. They still have the image that they are not welcome in the industry," said Flanagan. "The truth is that women are better diagnosticians than men are and they have more patience."

After graduating, Red Thunder is planning on raising her three-year-old daughter and opening her own business.

"I already have my own shop in my basement where I do tune-ups but I want to specialize," she said. "Clackamas has made me a stronger person. I was following a dream and if it wasn't really a part of who I am I would have never made it."

"Being an auto mechanic is something you are born with."

Marbella Red Thunder student



MARK VENCIUCCI / Clackamas Print

Marbella Red Thunder (right), automotive student, talks to ASE representative Dan Flanagan at the auto skills day competition.



MARK VENCIUCCI / Clackamas Print

High Schools from all over Oregon participated in the auto skills competition last Friday. This years' winner was Vale High School whose team was judged best in diagnosing and correcting malfunctions in the engine.

BIOLOGY . SECONDARY EDUCATION . MARKETING . SOCIAL STUDIES . ENGLISH

FOCUS ON YOUR CAREER

- Concordia is an accredited university recognized for quality
- Personal attention is given to make transfer as easy as possible
- Most majors include mentors and internships
- Merit scholarships and financial aid are available
- Day and evening classes
- Graduate with a resume as well as a degree

CONNECT AT
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

2811 NE Holman St · Portland · Oregon · 97211

1-800-321-9371

www.cu-portland.edu

admissions@cu-portland.edu



Kim Kellogg, CU alumna, recipient of the 1998 Sallie Mae Teacher of the Year Award



E-COMMERCE . PSYCHOLOGY . ACCOUNTING/FINANCE . BUSINESS . ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

HEALTH/FITNESS MANAGEMENT . DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION . ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A FUTURE of POSSIBILITIES

Choose a career that matters

Nutrition Undergraduate Completion Program

Explore nutrition at the foremost university for natural health sciences in the U.S. Graduates work as supportive nutrition educators, in the food industry and research or pursue advanced studies.

Whole foods approach, balanced with rigorous study of human biochemistry and nutrient metabolism.

Didactic Program in Dietetics option for those interested in becoming dietitians.

3-year, dual major with Exercise Science and Wellness.

425.602.3330

BASTYR UNIVERSITY

nutrition.bastyr.edu



"Just north of Seattle"