

# Prestigious award honors volunteer

**Karen Hill**  
FEATURE EDITOR

For an hour, volunteering might mean a Banyan award, given by College President Dr. Joe Johnson, largely due to her dedication to the Special Olympics.

Whitley was recently presented with a Banyan award, given by College President Dr. Joe Johnson, largely due to her dedication to the Special Olympics.

The Banyan award, given at the discretion of the president, is modeled after the college symbol—the Banyan tree. The Banyan tree sends out multiple roots throughout the years, thus getting stronger with age; representing the efforts of staff members reaching out to the community and thus contributing to the strength of the college.

Whitley works enough for the Special Olympics to make it her

full-time job, with Saturday and Sunday spent coaching the athletes and the rest of the week fulfilling her duties as public relations director; she also has a career at Clackamas as the purchasing, printing and warehousing manager.

Whitley was honored for her endless amount of time and effort, given freely to the Special Olympics. But, as Whitley made clear, she has received more from the athletes than she could ever provide to them.

"It's a really humbling experience working with them, but it's really enriching too," said Whitley. "I get more out of it than I could ever give."

There are no paid positions for the Special Olympics.

"We're all volunteers," said Whitley.

Whitley's interest in the Special Olympics began when she received a flyer in the mail, stating the need for a bowling coach. Feeling compelled to know more about the program, so she attended the meeting.

"I thought it was going to be a bunch of 8 year-olds with Down syndrome," said Whitley. "Wrong!"

The ages of the athletes range from eight to 50-something, and span several degrees of mental retardation.

Whitley admits she almost walked out in the beginning, not feeling comfortable with a room full of approximately 80 athletes. But she mustered up enough courage to stay.

"I just jumped in and within minutes, they caught my heart right there," said Whitley, who now coaches basketball, track and field, and bowling for the Special Olympics. "I'd do anything for them now. I don't see my life without them; they are the neatest people in the world. They're just so loving and so trusting and so giving."

During the track and field competitions, Whitley smiles when she watches wheelchairs cross the finish line.

"There's more cheering for that last wheelchair that comes over the line than there is for the first one," said Whitley. "It's really neat to see how they support each other on that."

The bowling competitions are made possible by putting a ramp next to the alley, in which the athlete just needs to get the ball rolling down the ramp. The slope of the ramp gives the ball the momentum to continue down the lane.

During last year's state championships, Whitley watched, teary-eyed, as an assistant massaged the hand of a man who was almost completely paralyzed. The small movement of one finger, nearly an impossible task for the individual, was all that was needed to send the ball rolling down the lane.

"When you looked at his face, you knew he knew what he did and he was excited about it," said Whitley.

Whitley also volunteers as the public relations director for the



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Lenny Erwin (left) is one of the many athletes Whitley coaches for the Clackamas County Special Olympics. "I don't see my life without them," said Whitley.

Special Olympics and works throughout the week to obtain maximum publicity to raise money for the organization. She writes newsletters, approaches newspapers for exposure and recently created holiday greeting cards to help raise money.

The cards, drawn and designed by Whitley, display portraits of various athletes on the front, and names and sports on the inside left. The inside of the greeting card reads, "Wishing you special memories this holiday season!" There are a dozen designs, each displaying a different competitor. The proceeds from the cards, which sell in packages of 12 cards and envelopes for \$10, go to the Clackamas County Special Olympics to benefit the 300 athletes involved.

"We don't charge them a penny," said Whitley.

Whitley also enjoys seeing the smiles on the athletes' faces and the energy and dedication they exhibit.

"They put their all and all into these sports; they just live for it," said Whitley. "They show up for practice at the bowling alley—we start at noon and they'll be there at 7 a.m. They don't want to miss it."

During the holidays, Whitley, several other coaches and "Santa Claus" visit the group homes of many of the athletes, delivering little gifts.

"It's really what Christmas is about," said Whitley.

Whitley, who has been involved in the Special Olympics for the three years, never imagined a letter in the mail could bring about what she has now.

"It's wonderful to be with them," she said. "You can [have] a horrible week, working like crazy, but on Saturday it's just all worth it."

Whitley drew and designed a dozen holiday greeting cards, each displaying a portrait of a Special Olympic athlete, to help raise funds for the Special Olympics. The inside of the cards read, "Wishing you special memories this holiday season!"



# Phi Theta Kappa President goes for the gold

**Cyndee Mady**  
CO EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Working part-time as a nanny, making time for family and taking 20-credit hours doesn't stop 18-year-old Stacie Barisheff from investing plenty of time in extra curricular activities on campus.

Although younger than many first-year students, Barisheff is already on her fourth year at Clackamas. She started in the home school options program at the age of 15, studying first-year French, and subsequently stepped into a full-time schedule of college courses.

"I'm just here another year because I wanted to do speech team for another year," said Barisheff. "I still have one more year of eligibility left at the two-year level and in my opinion, we have the best

speech team ever." Barisheff took home two bronze medals from last year's Nationals, led by Forensics Coach Kelly Brennan.

"Stacie is one of those competitors that coaches dream of. She has poise, confidence, dedication and loyalty," Brennan said. "Above all, she is one of those competitors that, when she is done competing against [her opponents], they wish that they had never competed against her—because she is that good."

Barisheff has high hopes for this year's Nationals.

"I would absolutely love to take home a gold," she said.

In the last two speech and debate tournaments, Barisheff has won a total of seven awards, including first-place in Senior Impromptu.

She is no stranger to competition, though. Formerly, she competed as a figure skater, trained by Tanya Harding.

"That was one of the best experiences that I've ever had. [Harding] is an amazing skater, so I learned a tremendous amount from her," said Barisheff. "I got to see what it was like to live in her life, and just how horrible people can be. She's one of the nicest people, and in my opinion, one of the best skaters in the world."

What brought Barisheff to the decision to quit skating?

"It was just that season in my life where it was over. I wanted to apply myself to school a lot more,"

she said. "It wasn't something that I could see doing with my life, and skating takes a huge commitment."

Barisheff now applies herself to the esteemed position of President of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), an international two-year honor society.

"I wanted to be involved in more school activities. PTK is a reward for doing well in school and a wonderful experience," said Barisheff.

Part of the mission of PTK is to work on a service project for the community, which for the past few years has been the American Cancer Society (ACS). Barisheff is planning several symposiums for winter term.

"[The symposiums] will inform people of the American Cancer Society and all the benefits," Barisheff said. "Everybody is

going to know somebody who has cancer or somebody in their family is going to get cancer. What we want to do is make people aware that there is a lot of help for them."

Art Department Chair and PTK Advisor Dave Anderson speaks highly of Barisheff and her work with the honor society.

"She's been a wonderful president and I know that she is an exceptional student," he said. "We have a whole bunch of things on the docket planned for winter and spring and Stacie will be coordinating all of it."

**"[Barisheff] is one of those competitors that coaches dream of. She has poise, confidence, dedication and loyalty."**

**Kelly Brennan**  
Speech Team Coach



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