

Former student returns a leader



Lydia Bashaw Clackamas Print

Truesdell (top) enjoys the festivities at the college's 40th Anniversary Celebration last Saturday. Truesdell got her start at Clackamas, little thinking that she would someday be its president.

Lydia Bashaw

The Clackamas Print

Twenty-seven years ago, College President Joanne Truesdell sat in the parking lot of Clackamas Community College trying to get up the courage to walk through the doors and jumpstart her future.

Experiencing the same uncertainty as many beginning college students, she struggled to make the big step into a college career.

"I didn't think college was in my future," said Truesdell at the May 9 board meeting where she was hired as Clackamas' new president.

In a room of staff and board members, she accepted the position to deafening applause and, shaking hands with each of the board members, was given a standing ovation. Wiping away tears of joy, she shared her vision of Clackamas.

"I owe everything to this college," she said. "I truly believe in the success of this school. We will rise above and beyond. We may be small, but we are mighty."

The decision to hire Truesdell came after a year of important changes.

After Former President Joe Johnson resigned last November, the college administration began the long search for new leadership. Truesdell, a 1982 graduate of Clackamas, applied and became interim president for the 2006-2007 school year.

Having personal experience with community colleges as first a student and then a member of the Commissioner's Board, Truesdell brings new ideas to old subjects. From budgeting issues to community college stereotypes, she takes the positive outlook. Fighting those stereotypes, she is a success story.

"I always talked about the impact community colleges have

on people," she said. "People fall through the cracks; not everyone can go to a university."

Starting college was difficult for Truesdell. At one point, she was convinced she was going to get her two-year degree and go out into the workforce, but a deep curiosity for learning kept her going.

"I wanted more education," she said. "I had all these thoughts, and I wanted words and ideas in my head."

Despite dealing with the stresses of working and going to school 20 credit hours a term, she graduated with a 3.68 GPA, much of which she owes to Clackamas' "supportive atmosphere."

"My hope is that everyone experiences what I experienced," she said. "I really believe that we have people [here] that want our students to be successful. That's something that hasn't changed in all these years."

Truesdell was hesitant to apply when she first heard the position had opened up. She spent a lot of time thinking.

"When I first found out in October that the presidency might be open, I just thought about it and thought about it," she said. "I kept thinking, 'It would be good to come back. It would be good to see if I was a good match.'"

Now that the hiring process is over, she can't contain her excitement. Relating her new place at the college to the feeling she had when she first met her husband, she felt it was easy to become part of Clackamas once again.

"Being here just felt completely natural," she said. "I didn't have to be someone else. I could be myself."

Though having a long resumé of "busy jobs," Truesdell finds time for family and friends. Her most recent hobby, playing the guitar, has taken a new precedence in her life. Along with hiking, fishing and gardening,

she spends her spare time doing whatever she can.

"I just like doing things. It's very eclectic," she said. "One weekend it might be fishing, and the next day it might be listening to my son's jazz band play at a function. It might be going to visit my family. It's whatever I make time to do."

As for the future of the college, she looks forward to making positive changes for the students, faculty and community. Setting aside the automatic work, such as budgeting and accreditation reviews, she finds time to get involved with the students as well. She has attended at least one event for each athletic team, and also has spent at least some time at every club-sponsored event on campus.

There is even time put into her schedule to share lunch in the cafeteria with students. She has a genuine interest in what students want.

"It's about learning what's going on outside and inside [campus]," she said. "Right now, the biggest objective is to find out what our community thinks about us and what they need from us. Internally, what is it that we need as a college? And what do we want from each other?"

Truesdell looks forward to marching Clackamas to the top in education. There are no boundaries as to where the college is going.

"It's not about being first; it's about showing up and having a good time and being deliberate in the things you do," she said.

With hope for the future, she foresees the next few years being the best for Clackamas, and the best for students. Sharing words of advice, she summed up the mission of Clackamas and her hopes for the student body:

"There were times when I wanted to stop. There were times when it would've been easy to stop — but don't — don't stop."

Wayne's world: Tai Chi class whips up whimsical wonders

Jess Sheppard

The Clackamas Print

When asked why he went into Tai Chi, Instructor Wayne Keller very seriously replied, "Unwanted pregnancy."

This is a perfect example of the non sequiturs Keller peppers throughout his classes.

Keller has always been interested in the elegance of Tai Chi's hidden power. The trick, however, was to find a quality teacher.

Luckily, he found one in Master George Xu.

Keller always smiles when he recounts stories about Master George. During his interview with *The Print*, he even broke out in song, praising his teacher to the tune of "George of the Jungle."

Surprisingly, there is still time between discussions of the latest movie in theaters and hilarious stories about Master George to learn hidden Tai Chi secrets, such as Earth, Spiral and Yi.

And what secrets they are! When the students in his

Winter Term class challenged him to push them all over at once, Keller surprised them by having them all line up and push him together. Using his superior Tai Chi skills, he pushed back — and the whole class fell backwards like a line of dominoes.

"What old men call skill young men call cheating" — his favorite saying — was the only explanation given to his baffled students. Oddly enough, it is these sayings that make him a fun instructor.

"What old men call skill young men call cheating."

Wayne Keller
Tai Chi Instructor

But beneath the jokes and laughter, he is serious about his classes. Many of the stories told in class are in fact hidden secrets of Tai Chi.

"I think he is a very cool teacher who appears to know what he is doing," said Kent Hall, one of the students in Advanced Tai Chi, "and he listens to the questions of the students."

As if to confirm this opinion, Keller admitted that his favorite

aspect of teaching is seeing the light-bulbs go on in people's eyes when they suddenly understand his lessons.

On the reverse, he dislikes the financial strings that tend to come with teaching. Consequently, he is fond of teaching privately because of the personal intimacy that comes with it.

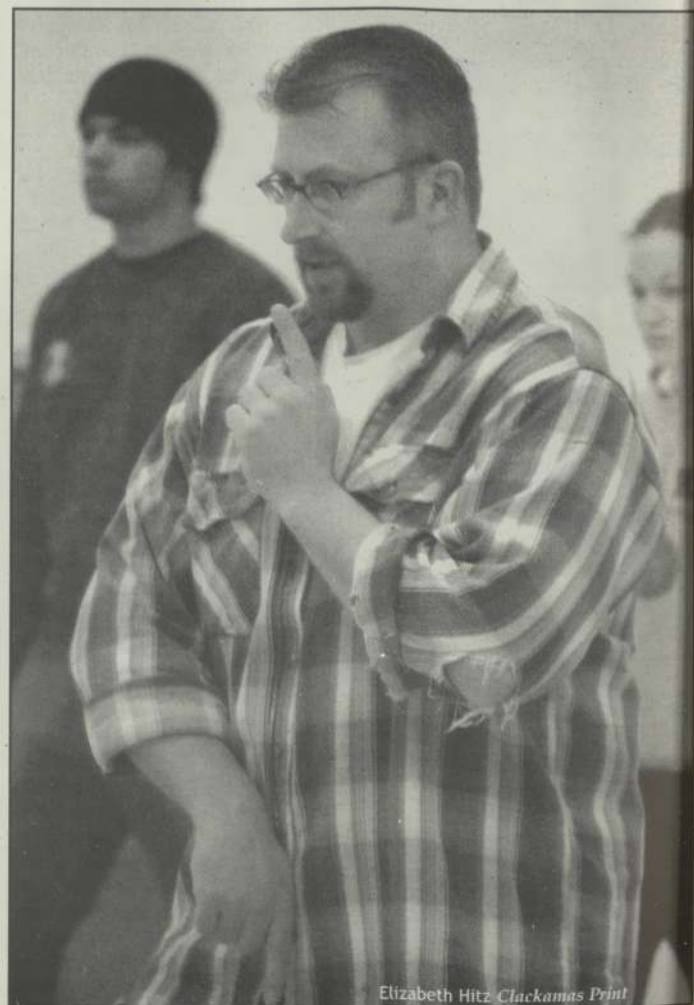
Keller hails from Portland, or what he calls "Land of Mist and Dew."

His hobbies include camping and good food, particularly ethnic food. He also enjoys video games, such as *Elder Scrolls: Oblivion* and *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* for the Xbox. In addition, he also plays old-school Pong.

Keller has been teaching at Clackamas for 11 years, but his experience goes even further back. He has been teaching Tai Chi for a total of 16 years and Martial Arts for 20.

He also teaches private classes in Philippine Stick/Knife fighting and offers many types of bodywork and massage.

Keller instructs his students to elongate their spines during stepping drills. Tai Chi classes are available Fall Term every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.



Elizabeth Hitz Clackamas Print