



Joshua Dillen The Clackamas Print

Jerred Sundquist, president of the CCC Veterans Club, helps struggling student veterans with unexpected financial needs. He has worked to develop funding sources for the Veterans Club at CCC to provide discretionary grants to help GI Bill recipients in between benefit payments.

Struggling vets receive extra college money

By Joshua Dillen
News Editor

Every drop in the bucket counts, especially when those drops are discretionary dollars for struggling veterans attending college. Free money will be available to these students to fill gaps in how their GI Bill monies are dispersed, beginning this summer term at Clackamas Community College.

Oregon City Elks and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) have donated \$6,700 to the Veteran's Club at the college. Elks members Dick and Barbara Knudson donated \$5,000. With these donations, the Pay It Forward Program has been established to provide grants to veteran students who need a little extra financial help.

Veteran's Club president Jerred Sundquist saw a need among fellow students in the club, one he had experienced himself. Late payments of benefits through the GI Bill would really affect a veteran's financial situation when attending

school, whether it be supplies, gas, lack of money or even food and diapers needed for their children. Besides the monetary frustrations, veterans have many other issues to deal with compared to non-military students. Sundquist felt it was important to do his best to solve these issues and take on an active role to help his fellow vets — to give extra financial help during these crucial times.

"An old military instructor of mine once said, 'You make time for the things that are important to you,'" said Sundquist.

"I could not have done this without the help of everybody here at the Veteran's Club," he said. "Their efforts took an idea and turned it into this great proposal to the Oregon City Elks that turned into an endowment that will pay veteran students every term."

Greg Myers, club adviser to the Veterans Club, with connections to key members of the Oregon City Elks Club and the VFW, helped coordinate the proposal that led to the donations for the

Pay It Forward Program. Myers is a reserve officer in the Marines and understands the potential financial plight that some students face with gaps in their GI Bill compensation. In spite of his education and the qualifications from his military career, he has experienced unemployment and struggled to make ends meet for his family during the nation's past and current economic climate.

"It's been very hard for me. I realized how difficult it was for me," Myers said, "but what about a kid who has no education and coming back from one tour who has a wife couple of kids like me? It's even worse!"

"It's groundbreaking stuff when the students get together and are essentially turning ideas into action," said Myers. "You don't see that very often."

Sundquist expressed that the program never would have happened if not for the help of Secretary Tina Weeks and Treasurer Georgia Heimlich and their passion for making sure the program will continue to get the

fundraising it will need to grow. He explained that there will be enough money dispersed to help two students with a small grant at the beginning of summer term. Qualified students will be able to fill out an application that shows need and the most qualified will be awarded. Exact details of those needs are still being worked out as is the exact amount of the grant awarded to each student. With available funds that were willed to the foundation from a vet's life insurance policy there was enough money to create an endowment that would make and payout

money indefinitely. According to Sundquist, there is more than \$16,000 in the fund and it is still growing.

Vicki Smith, development officer with the CCC Foundation is coordinating the administration of the endowment fund for the Veteran's Club. She explained that the annual payment from the endowment will go into a Fund for Excellence that will provide quarterly grants to veteran students.

"This is just one more way CCC is supporting its veteran students," said Smith.



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