

'EDUCATION IS FOREVER. IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO START.'

Gudelia Contreras Flores | 2012 GED graduate



Photos by Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Jason Johnston holds his son Ryan Johnston, 1, before receiving his GED certificate during the GED graduation ceremony Monday at Clatsop Community College.

GED graduates are 'bravest students in the world'

Knowing we are not all on the same learning schedule is liberating

When my wife attends the pinning ceremony for Clatsop Community College's nursing program, her description of the graduates and their families brings tears to my eyes.

She was an instructor in that program. She became intimately aware of the economic and family pressures on many of the students.

On Monday night I saw another set of college graduates get their diplomas. It was no less emotional. These men and women had obtained their GED certificates. It is the equivalent to a high school diploma. Tom Gill, dean of Transfer Education, invited me to speak. Of the 27 who were eligible, seven came to the ceremony.



Steve Forrester

These are "the bravest students in the world," said Gill.

The most eloquent speaker of the evening was Gudelia Contreras Flores, a 2012 GED graduate. Flores described herself as "a migrant worker," and she came to the CCC program with no English language skills.

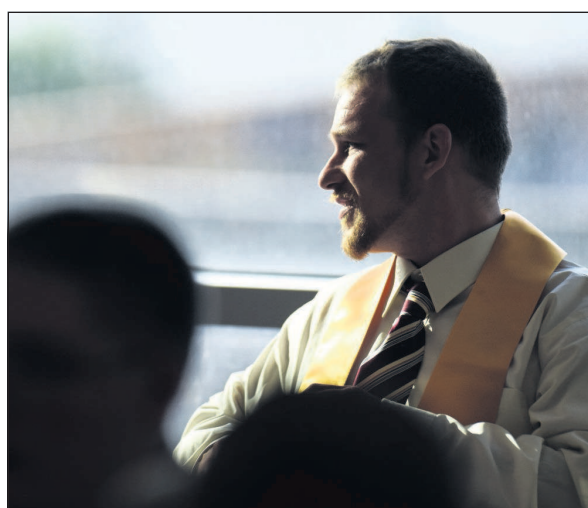
She was drawn to the annual WINGS conference (Women Interested in Going to School). Of that day she said: "That was the best payday I had. I never looked back. I realized you have to be something in your life."

Challenging the night's graduates, she said: "The GED is key to open doors to higher education."

In her final admonition Flores said: "Education is forever. It is never too late to start."

Compared to when I graduated from high school and college (1964 and 1971), we have come a long way in understanding two things. There is growing recognition that all of us are not on the same schedule when it comes to earning a diplomas. Secondly, we understand how each of us is driven by different learning styles.

To someone who is not on the same schedule as many of his peers, those two realizations are liberating.



Seaside's Jason Kinnunen looks out the window after receiving his GED certificate Monday at Clatsop Community College.

I owe the U.S. Marine Corps for convincing me that I wanted to get a college education. Entering Portland State University in 1968, I was far more motivated than I was in my first college career, which ended in flunking out.

It is easy for me to take my college diploma for granted. But I remember my father's words at a post-graduation dinner. He quoted the punch line of a joke: "By God, he made it."

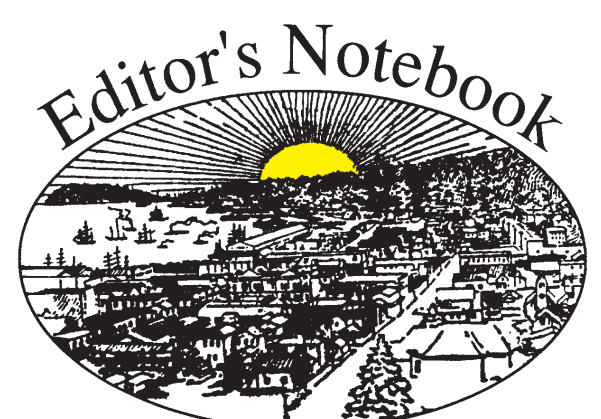
We do things for other people. Someone in our lives — whether family, a friend, teacher, coach — pushes us to complete our education. Monday night's GED graduates were joined by family and friends who were demonstrably emotionally invested in the outcome we all observed.

My contribution to the evening was brief. I took joy in quoting my favorite guru, Earl Weaver, manager of the Baltimore Orioles in their golden years. Said the Baltimore skipper: "It's what you learn after you think you know it all that counts."

— S.A.F.

2016 CLATSOP COMMUNITY COLLEGE GED GRADUATES

Austin Auttelet	Davis Haymond
Dillon Bloomer	Shaun Jesse
Jeff Bolles	Jason Johnston
Jakob Bunnell	Brian Kettner
Andrew Burkhart	Jason Kinnunen
Shane Corbin	Kristina Martin
Zachary Dean	Mary Murry
Kilie Donovan	Brent Newberry
Emily-Jean Duell	Shelly Newman
Curtis Fosdick	Veronica Parra Calderon
Christian Goodemote	Connor Reynolds
Randall Hamm	Kendel Shelton
Donald Hammack	Joshua Weis
Clayton Hanson	Lakota Wilson
Darrelle Harkleroad	



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DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

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