

OPINION

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THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

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GUEST COLUMN

WINGS empowers education for women

What can we in our community do to improve the lives and prospects of our local women and children, who have so much potential to make Clatsop County a more vibrant and equitable place to live and work?

We can give them WINGS!

We are gearing up for the 16th year for WINGS (Women Interested in Going to School) and close to 800 women have taken advantage of this free conference. It offers sessions with college staff, who provide useful information and timelines to get started on an educational track. Sessions include information on earning a GED, costs and financial support options, learning about Lives in Transition (LIT), conquering math anxiety, Clatsop Community College degrees and certificate programs.

This one-day conference also includes a LATINA WINGS track in the morning, with Spanish-speaking staff volunteering their time to help women know that they can come to the community college to gain English skills and further their education. More importantly, they'll learn that the college welcomes them.

What is great about WINGS is that women will begin the day with trepidation about their perceived barriers to learning, and leave with relief and enthusiasm as they figure out they can and should get on with their education, be it seeking a degree, a GED or workforce job training. The conference is packed with how to plan and begin, what support and programs are available, and who can assist them.

This year the WINGS conference takes place this Saturday, Feb. 10 at Clatsop



The Daily Astorian

Michelle Hartman is an alumna of the WINGS conference, which helped her secure a \$4,000 entrepreneurial scholarship at Clatsop Community College. 'Don't be afraid to do it,' Hartman told The Daily Astorian's readers in 2017, 'because once you're in there, you'll feel so much better, just knowing that people care.'

Community College. Registration opens at 8 a.m. and wraps up by 3:30. It is free to all participants, with breakfast, lunch, and child care provided. The morning begins with a "can do" speaker and greetings from people in leadership. We hear the real work done and accomplished from WINGS graduates. Attendees see and hear about the community that supports their education. To broaden the world of work potential, there is a presentation from women working in non-traditional jobs.

Everyone working this WINGS conference

volunteers their time and knowledge because we know how important a good education is. Members of Astoria and Seaside American Association of University Women (AAUW) and staff and faculty at the community college organized this conference beginning in 2002 to give women the information, support and encouragement needed to return to school. The day focuses on moms who had to quit their educations to raise kids, enter the workforce, or just weren't ready for college after high school. We reached out to women

REGISTER

It's not too late to sign up for Saturday's conference. If you or someone you know would benefit from attending WINGS, have them register for free at wings-clatsop.com or call Pat at 503-717-1852 (503-338-2379 for Spanish).

who might be ready to increase their skills to advance in work.

AAUW had its beginnings in 1881, when too few women were allowed to obtain college degrees. Some of those graduates knew they needed to have an organization that would speak out for education and equity issues, and further their own craving for learning. AAUW is a national organization with more than 115,000 members today.

The Astoria Branch formed in 1927 and the Seaside Branch followed in 1942. Both branches continue advocating for that inclusive dialogue that can come with an educated and informed community. We invite the public to attend our programs, and join AAUW if they support our mission of advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research.

Please, if you or someone you know would benefit from attending WINGS, have them register for free at wings-clatsop.com or call Pat at 503-717-1852 (503-338-2379 for Spanish).

Money donations are tax-deductible and greatly appreciated. Send checks to CCC Foundation (put WINGS on the information line) and mail to CCC College, 1651 Lexington Ave. Astoria, OR 97103.

Sara Meyer of Astoria is a member of the American Association of University Women and co-chair of the WINGS conference.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Secret to success is 'good genes, wine and chocolate'

A popular fixture in the community, Marion Blake and her daughter Mary Blake — the retired director of Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District — live together. Marion will be 100 years old this year and a big celebration is planned.

"Marion Blake was an avid golfer, before age caught up with her," Chelsea Gorrow wrote in a 2014 Daily Astorian profile. "She now uses a cane with



R.J. MARX

four feet to get around. But that's the only visible sign that she's 96 years old. The petite and fit woman wears glittery nail polish, stylish white-framed glasses, pink lipstick and gold jewelry, including a beautiful bangle bracelet and fashionable rings. Her daughter shared that Marion Blake weighs the same as she did in college."

Four years later, all still holds true. We caught up with the Blakes at their Seaside home, alongside canine friends Ruby and Sunshine.



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Marion Blake, right, poses for a photo with her daughter, Mary Blake.



One of Marion Blake's pets sits obediently at her feet.

cer, and she didn't (survive). Her husband died of a broken heart.

Marion: I think I adjust to my circumstances. Two daughters and a husband gone. I'm super, super blessed to be living with my daughter. That's what's making my life so pleasant.

Q: You've always had a great relationship?

Marion: Very good.

Q: I don't want to ask what is your secret ... but what is your secret?

Marion: The secret is good genes, red wine and dark chocolate. And I like a dry

"martooni." It's good for partying.

I'm still playing bridge four days a week. I play duplicate. I play at the Astoria Country Club, at the Bob Chisholm Community Center once a week and twice a week in Astoria at the senior center.

It's fun, but it's very competitive. I have good partners.

I watch a lot of TV.

Q: What do you like?

Marion: I watch Stephen Colbert. I am a night owl. I get in the sack and I watch until 1 a.m.

Q: And you wake up when?

Marion: I wake up at six and at seven. I don't waste a lot of time sleeping too much.

Mary: She does her stretches when she gets up. She's very flexible. She was a swimmer and swings on the swings higher than anybody else.

Marion: I'm a big sports fan.

Q: What's your favorite sport?

Marion: Football.

Q: Pro or college?

Marion: Pro.

Q: What's your favorite team?

Marion: Well, the Seahawks.

Mary: And also the Denver Broncos. We were big fans when John Elway was the quarterback.

Q: Who's your favorite president?

Marion: Oh, the one now! (rolls eyes.)
Mary: When Hillary was there it was really quite a moment to be able to vote for a woman president. She (Marion) follows that really closely.

Marion: I like Rachel Maddow. I like her coverage.

Q: Are there others in town who are your age?

Marion: I'm always the oldest one in the crowd.

Q: Any regrets?

Marion: No regrets over the years. Accept the positive.

Q: What do you have planned for your birthday?

Mary: We are going to do a party out at the club. We did a big party for her on the 90th with a slide presentation, so we were able to pull up some of the terrific pictures.

Q: Any goals for the new year?

Marion: Just play more bridge and kick butt.

Q: Whose butt are you going to kick? The other bridge players?

Marion: Oh yes, the opponents!

Mary: I always knew she was going to be 100, so I asked her, "When are you thinking about passing?" She said: "Oh, I think I'm going to live forever."

I said, "Well, that's very spiritual but what does that mean?" She said, "114, 117 — that would be OK."

She's a real inspiration. Whenever anything comes up, she's always eager to get into the car, go for a walk with Ruby — it's amazing.

And she didn't want to go to assisted living. She said: "You know there are a lot of old people there."

Marion: Heaven forbid assisted living! The way I feel now, I have a lot of time ahead of me on this planet.

Mary: She says: "I don't mind a routine, but I hate a rut."

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.