

'Big Give Day' Hopes to Energize Student Support

Encouraging Support for PCC's Programs and Scholarships

From Oct. 8-9, the PCC Foundation will host its sixth annual "Big Give Day," a community giving event designed to encourage support for Portland Community College's programs and scholarships. This year, the goal is to raise \$100,000 in 36 hours.

"Big Give Day" kicks off at noon, Tuesday, Oct. 8 and runs until 11:59 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 9. Using the power of networking and crowdfunding, the event invites alumni, faculty, staff, and friends of PCC to contribute to vital initiatives. Donors will have the option to support one of 24 college scholarships and programs.

According to a recent survey by the Hope Center for College, Community and Justice, a staggering 64% of PCC's students reported experiencing basic needs insecurity. This crisis extends beyond Portland, with over 52% of students in Oregon's community colleges facing housing insecurity during the pandemic. "Big Give Day" provides critical resources that can change lives and support the goals of PCC students.

Dance enthusiast Mson Gongora, a recent graduate, was the first in his family to attend college



Gina Eygenhuysen

and earned two associate degrees. He credits a scholarship through PCC's Future Connect Program, a program for students who identify as first-generation or low-income, for his success. Future Connect made up the biggest contribution towards his education expenses but he also received funding from other sources like the Oregon Opportunity Grant, the Pell Grant and a PCC Foundation scholarship. He incurred no debt, having paid for college solely through grants

and scholarships.

"PCC helped a kid who grew up with nothing to want more," Gongora said. "They gave me the ability to dream."

Gina Eygenhuysen transitioned from an unfulfilling marketing job to pursue a nursing degree at PCC. It wasn't easy – unable to work while immersed in the demanding program, she struggled to make ends meet. Free food pantries became her lifeline, and PCC Foundation scholarships provided the

crucial financial support she needed to stay focused on her studies.

"Thank you to the donors who supported me," she said. "I hope PCC continues receiving donations so more students can pursue their education. There are so many people who want to learn, but financial barriers hold them back."

The Foundation distributes \$2.3 million in scholarships annually to more than 1,500 students, ensuring they have access to training and education at PCC and the sup-

port needed to succeed, regardless of their ability to pay.

"We are so thankful to everyone who comes together each year to support PCC programs and scholarships," said PCC Foundation Executive Director Christina Kline. "It's incredible what we can achieve when we join forces. The funds raised on 'Big Give Day' have a profound impact on our students' lives."

Learn more and help spread the word at pcc.edu/biggiveaday.

Respiratory Virus Season Begins

Health Experts Urge Vaccinations

As the 2024-2025 respiratory virus season gets under way, statewide infectious disease experts urge everyone in Oregon to Risk Less. Do More. in alignment with a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) national vaccination campaign.

Risk Less. Do More. aims to increase awareness of vaccines that reduce serious illness from influenza, COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in high-risk populations and to limit the spread of these viruses.

"These immunizations act as our best defense against severe disease which can affect anyone," said Melissa Sutton, M.D., Oregon Health Authority (OHA) medical director for respiratory viral pathogens.

Sutton, Sarah Laiosa, D.O., public health officer for Malheur and Harney counties and Richard



Doctor giving an injection to a patient (Photo by Gregory Miller/Adobe Stock)

Bruno, M.D., health officer for Multnomah County – speaking to reporters during a virtual media briefing today – said RSV is the most common cause of hospitalization among infants in the United States, with up to 3% of all infants younger than 6 months hospitalized each year. Most of these infants, he said, have no underlying medical conditions. Similarly, about half of children

hospitalized with COVID-19 have no underlying medical conditions.

"As a physician, I care for patients with these infections in the community, as well as patients who require hospitalization. And I know that many people in Oregon have questions about vaccines. It is important that people seek information directly from a health care provider they trust before deciding what is best for them," said Laiosa.

The physicians also reminded people at increased risk of severe COVID-19 infection and influenza to talk to their health care provider about what to do if they get sick. People at increased risk for severe COVID-19 infection include older adults, pregnant women and those with underlying medical conditions. People at increased risk for severe influenza infection include those same groups, as well as children younger than 5.

"Compared with other states, we have among the lowest number of hospital beds per person in the nation. That means that any increase in respiratory diseases can quickly fill our emergency rooms

and hospitals, slowing care for all and putting incredible pressure on our dedicated frontline healthcare workers," Laiosa said.

"Specifically, in rural areas like mine, access to care can include additional challenges such as extreme weather events, prolonged road closures, long distances to the nearest health care provider and limited emergency medical resources. Preventing severe illness through vaccines and early treatment is essential," she added.

In addition to recommending vaccinations, Bruno explained that Oregon is experiencing measles and pertussis outbreaks. Vaccines for both diseases are widely available and free to all children through the Vaccines for Children program.

"There have been 31 measles cases reported during the current outbreak—Oregon's highest number of cases since 1991," Bruno said. "All cases have occurred in unvaccinated people and two have developed severe disease requiring hospitalization. The good news is that the most recent measles case was confirmed in mid-August and we may be

nearing the end of this outbreak."

"Oregon has fallen below the 95% threshold for herd immunity in school-age children," Bruno said. During the 2023-24 school year, he said, only 91.2% of kindergartners in Oregon were fully vaccinated against measles.

OHA is urging health care providers to use the Risk Less. Do More. campaign, which offers a range of resources to share with patients, including handouts, digital banners for websites and social media messages. The agency is calling on all providers to order and offer immunizations to all eligible patients at each visit. And, they should familiarize themselves with COVID-19 and influenza antiviral treatments, which, like immunizations, reduce the risk of severe disease.

People can get the COVID-19 and influenza vaccines by contacting their health plan, health care provider, county public health clinic or a federally qualified health center (FQHC). Oregonians can also search for a clinic by ZIP code at vaccinefinder.org, by calling 211 or visiting 211info.org.