

GRADS: About 4,400 attended event in new Kennewick venue

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gushed alumnus, gave students several pointers.

"Focus on lifelong learning, formal or informal," he said.

He urged the graduates to engage with the world, put down their cell phones and take their futures seriously.

"If you think for some reason you don't have the right stuff, I'm here to tell you that you do," he said. "I challenge you to prepare for every opportunity."

After each student had received their diploma, valedictorian Reed Middleton said a few words. She asked her classmates not to back down from the challenges that might come their way.

"We may even have to pump our own gas — the atrocity!" she said to laughs from the crowd.

"Never forget to turn



A crowd of about 4,400 people watched the Hermiston High School Class of 2018 graduate Thursday night at the Toyota Center in Kennewick.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

around and thank the people who got you there," she said.

Then, she led her classmates in the turning of the tassel.

As graduates tossed their caps and reunited with their families, many reflected on the last few years.

Ja'Qwaya Gooden said the reality hadn't quite hit her yet.

"I'm really happy I made it," she said. "I thank everyone who got me here."

Though parents and families faced heavy traffic while traveling from Hermiston to Kennewick, many said they were happy with the new venue.

"It was good to have it here, so many families could come," said Betty Gutierrez, there to watch her grandson Joey graduate. "Everybody wants to be here to see this happen."

School board member Bonnie Luisi said about 4,400 people attended the event.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Adilene Chavez-Moncada welcomed the crowd of about 4,400 in Spanish Thursday night.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Thomas McCullough claps during a speech by fellow graduate Salma Anguiano on Thursday night.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Monica Arias holds her diploma high Thursday night at the Toyota Center in Kennewick.

BMCC: Frink has experience as banker, private consultant and SBDC advisor

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and prospective entrepreneurs. A 40-year Hermiston resident, Frink didn't start her career as a turnaround artist.

Frink was a banker for more than 12 years, working at the same local branch as it underwent a number of acquisitions, going from Western Heritage Savings and Loan to Benj. Franklin Savings and Loan to Bank of America.

Faced with approving small business loans, Frink said she became well-acquainted with aspiring merchants.

Applicants were seldom short on dreams or ideas, but definitive business plans weren't always part of the equation. Frink's first priority was to make sure the bank was making a good investment and not offering sound business advice, so she often sent applicants to the SBDC to refine their proposal.

She got to experience the other side of the coin when she was hired as an SBDC business adviser in 2002.

Not only did she help prospective business owners secure financing, but she helped them develop business plans and make sense of the

numbers.

Frink said the SBDC business advisers offer a degree of separation, offering objective advice and preparing them for the challenges that will come.

"If you run a marathon, you don't just show up on the day of the race," she said.

Frink had done private business consulting work in the past, and she left the SBDC to start a new consulting business in 2012.

When BMCC recruited her to return to the SBDC as the director, it was not in good condition.

The turnaround

Ironically, Frink felt that the SBDC was operating without a plan and direction, and it was reflected by BMCC's center being the lowest contributing member organization in the state.

Frink replaced many of the SBDC employees with a fresh set of advisers and they set about drumming up business.

From 2016 to 2017, the center's clients increased from 213 to 265 and its capital infusion — the amount in loans and equity investments its clients made — grew from \$439,119 to \$1 million.

Their number of new jobs



Staff photo by Antonio Sierra

Kim and Rodney Burt, owners of OMG! Burgers & Brew, worked with the BMCC Small Business Development Center to launch their restaurant this year.

created and new jobs were basically flat (15 to 16 and 33 to 31, respectively), but Frink said one of the most important statistics was the SBDC's return on investment.

For every state dollar spent, the BMCC SBDC created \$239 in state revenue while every federal dollar produced \$2.56 in federal revenue.

Also important: SBDC-assisted businesses last longer.

Frink said that only 18 percent of business in Oregon last longer than 18 months. With the help of the SBDC, the per-

centage jumps to 85 percent.

Cumulatively, Frink said is now the third best performing center in the state after the SBDCs in Portland and Lane County.

Among the smiling faces on the program's redesigned website is Nadeem Akhlaq, the owner of the Rugged Country Lodge in Pendleton.

Testimonials

Originally from Pakistan, Akhlaq immigrated to the U.S. in 2014, initially settling down in Orlando, Florida, where his sister resided.

A physician by trade, Akhlaq had trouble getting a job in the medical field because of his lack of experience in American medicine.

Akhlaq befriended a man who owned motels throughout the Northwest, and without any other job prospects, accepted a job in motel management in the Tri-Cities.

His friend also owned the Rugged Country Lodge, and when the management position opened, he moved again.

Akhlaq eventually considered buying the Southeast Court Avenue motel, and under the advice of a different friend, he contacted the SBDC.

Adviser Terry Becktold began directing him to banks to apply for a small business loan, but when the lodge owner announced he was moving to Delaware, Akhlaq needed to make a decision.

He was hesitant to approach the owner about buying the property, but with Becktold's encouragement, Akhlaq was not only able to secure the purchase of the Rugged Country Lodge but a financing deal with the owner.

Akhlaq said the SBDC helped with other tasks —

setting up a limited liability company, compiling a list of restaurants to recommend to lodgers — and he continues to seek guidance from Becktold.

"She guided me (through) everything," he said.

Kim and Rodney Burt were first-time restaurateurs when they applied for a Jump Start loan from the Pendleton Development Commission to help them open OMG! Burgers & Brew on South Main Street.

Rodney said the commission recommended they visit the SBDC to create a business plan during the application process.

Rodney said the SBDC offered valuable advice, like maintaining an advertising budget, and with the business plan they formulated, the Burt's were able to secure the \$19,000 loan.

Frink said fresh business owners often assume that the most successful companies thrive independently, but she's trying to disabuse them of that notion.

"It's not a bad thing to get help," she said.

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BOUNDS: Hermiston native will have lifetime appointment if approved

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ingly of ethnically based student clubs and "sensitivity" and criticized universities for using a lower standard of proof than "beyond a reasonable doubt" when taking action against students accused of sexual assault.

Bounds has since denounced those writings, calling them tone-deaf "college kid" opinions that "do not reflect the views I have hewn to as a lawyer and, frankly, as a grown-up."

Bounds declined to comment to the *East Oregonian* Thursday about the judiciary committee hearing.

But after the op-eds came to light Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley declined to issue a "blue slip" of support, which is customarily

given by a nominee's home state senators before the Senate Judiciary Committee moves forward. Democrats have criticized the committee for going ahead with the nomination process without the blue slips, and last month Wyden on the Senate floor called ignoring the advice and consent of home state senators a "dangerous mistake."

"What is clear to me is that the majority is now chipping away at a century of bipartisan tradition that has protected the interests of those in our home state and served as a check on the power of the executive," he said.

Committee Chair Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, addressed those concerns at Thursday morning's vote, accord-

ing to the video recording of the proceedings, stating that it was his policy that negative or unreturned blue slips should not necessarily block a nominee from having a hearing, and pointing out that a screening committee convened by Wyden and Merkley had recommended Bounds as a nominee in the first place.

He said that during the hearing Bounds had been able to answer questions about his college writings and "clarify the confusion" about why he had not previously declined them (Bounds testified that staff from Wyden's office had only asked for materials going back to law school).

"We shouldn't assume that views expressed years ago during college and law

school represent the nominee today, especially when the nominees tell us that they don't. Let's let all 100 senators — not just two — decide whether Mr. Bounds deserves to be confirmed," he said.

After his remarks multiple Democratic senators expressed their disapproval of Grassley's "unprecedented" decision to allow nominees to have a hearing after neither home state Senator returned a blue slip. Wyden also issued a statement calling the views expressed in Bounds' writings as "archaic and alarming" and stating it was "a sad day for justice when Senator Grassley feels free to shatter an agreed-upon process that has long proved itself as a fair and bipartisan way

to ensure nominees for a lifetime appointment to the bench meet the highest standards for honesty."

Bounds graduated from Hermiston High School, then received an undergraduate degree from Stanford in 1995 and his law degree from Yale.

He has practiced commercial law in Portland, was a federal prosecutor for the District of Columbia, served as an assistant to the President on domestic policy and is currently an assistant U.S. attorney in Oregon. His community engagement includes serving as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for foster children and on the Diversity & Inclusion Committee of the Portland Bar.

Rep. Greg Walden has supported Bounds' nomi-

nation, describing him as a "talented and effective prosecutor" with a strong record of public service. He has also been the subject of letters of support from local politicians and attorneys, some of whom wrote in a guest viewpoint for the *East Oregonian* that "We can represent without hesitation that Ryan's path has been one of growth, intellectual curiosity and rigor, love of his family, friends, and community, and respect for the humanity of others."

If the Senate approves his nomination he will have a lifetime appointment as a judge on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

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