

COCC Student Profile

Earning a degree in Aviation-Helicopters

Robert Thomas is set to graduate from Central Oregon Community College in June. He is working toward an Associate in Science degree in Aviation-Helicopter.

Robert was in the Navy from 2006-2010, as a nuclear machinist, stationed at the South Carolina Naval Weapons Base. He had two years of training at the Navy Nuclear Power Training Command.

"Before coming to school, I worked at Kah-Nee-Ta," Robert was saying recently.

"My boss, Raymond Hurtado, told me to go back to school. He said I was too smart to be working at this kind of job the rest of my life."

His cousin was an inspiration for Robert to join the COCC Aviation program.

"He passed while I was in the military, but I wasn't allowed to leave for his funeral," Robert said.

"He always wanted to fly airplanes and was going after it for years. So I started chasing it to honor his memory, but I had to make it my own dream, which is why I chose helicopters and not planes."

"My grandpa Snuff was a Viet Nam vet, and he



Robert Thomas piloting helicopter.

talked about helicopters all the time, so he was also part of my decision."

First starting at COCC was something of a culture shock for Robert. "In the military I was so used to being told what to do and learn," he says. "It was weird being given free rein over my self. It kind of made it hard in the beginning."

"My grades were great, but I still wasn't used to it, like the idea that there might be multiple right answers. I was used to there only being one way, and sometimes that threw me off."

He loves flying the aircraft. "It's amazing being in charge of a machine that could kill you with one tiny mistake,"

Robert says.

"You have to respect it and give it your undivided attention. Sometimes even if you're doing it all right, you still have to be aware. I love being in charge and having the responsibility of keeping the people safe on your flight."

A career goal for Robert is to do something for the community, like firefighting work. "There's a lot of different routes to getting to that point, I just need to figure out what route I want to take."

"Warm Springs is my home, and it's a place I can come back to. But you can't make a community better if you're surrounded by bad. So I want to go out and learn

about other communities and what makes them work and bring that back here."

Robert mentors Native kids at Madras High School, and has volunteered his time at the COCC STRIVE program.

"I've also done the Homeless Count for two years with the American Legion. I volunteer to help chaperone the kids snowboarding up at Mt. Hood, and I've coached t-ball."

"During my time in the military, we also helped clean up public schools and I also helped upcoming cadets with tutoring in their classes."

"It's important to know what you're capable of," Robert says. "If I didn't love the flying I probably would have done an apprenticeship somewhere, since I really like working with my hands. My weakness is the book studying, because I'd rather be out flying. I know I have to do it so I do it."

His belief as to what can make for a successful life: "You have to do what you love."

(Note: Gina Ricketts, director of the COCC Native American program, helped with this article.)

CFS seeking foster parents

Warm Springs Children and Family Services is looking for qualified foster parents. Children and Family Services can assist anyone who wishes to provide a certified foster care home.

Please call Emily Courtney for information. You can reach her during regular business hours at Children and Family Services on the campus, or call 541-553-3209 or 541-615-0036.

There are responsibilities that come with being a foster parent. Some examples:

The foster parent must be available for monthly home visits, and complete and submit monthly reports.

There is a requirement of 10 hours of training per year, and a back-

ground check. The foster parent, or the person transporting the foster child, must have a valid operator's license.

Within the first year of certification, the parent must obtain a CPR/First Aid card.

The certification process for foster homes has been aimed to build a partnership between the prospective foster parents and Children and Family Services.

The availability of high qualified foster homes is essential to Warm Springs Children and Family Services. Foster homes provide the nurturing, stability and safety that each child needs until he or she can return to his or her birth family, or until the child can be placed into a permanent home.

Culture Night and Fair at Academy

The Culture and Heritage Department will host the Culture Night and Fair on March 19 at the Warm Springs Eagle Academy.

The goal of the Culture Night and Fair is to provide students and families with a positive learning experience. The subject will be the culture and community of Warm Springs.

A Tribal Council priority is improving academic performance and cultural preservation, by implementing tribal language and cultural curricula, Deanie said. "The Culture Night and Fair will be a great opportunity to start working toward this goal," she said.

There are several ways to get involved, and the door is

open to all. Some of the ways to get involved include hosting a classroom by teaching a cultural activity, conducting a performance, or providing food or supplies.

If you are interested in participating in this event, please contact Deanie Smith at 541-553-3290.

Or email at: deanie.smith@wstribes.org

W.S. Academy Science Fair

The Warm Springs Eagle Academy Science Fair is coming up on Tuesday, March 10. Seventh- and eighth-grade students are reminded to work on your projects. Everyone is welcome to attend. For more information call the Academy at 541-553-1128.

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Greeley playground

A reminder the Greeley Heights Playground is closed until further notice for safety reasons with the new home construction going on and heavy truck traffic.

Parent conferences at k-8

The Warm Springs K-8 Eagle Academy is having conferences this Friday, March 6.

Kindergarten through fifth grade is extending personal in-

vites to families. Teachers will be making appointments with all families.

Sixth grade will have an open drop-in policy for conferences with some invites for families.

Seventh- and eighth-grades will be an open schedule where families can stop by any time.

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