

Lives in Transition program returns to Seaside

Andrew R. Tonry
for the EO Media Group

"She was a single parent coming out of a divorce that she never thought she would go through," said Margaret Frimoth.

With the help of Lives in Transition, a continuing education program at Clatsop Community College, that single mother built a new — and wholly unforeseen — career.

"She got through Lives in Transition and found it very supportive and empowering and healing, so she signed up for other classes," said Frimoth, the program's director. But after a long scholastic layoff, the mother found college math to be trying.

"In math," Frimoth said, "she thinks: 'I'm not smart enough. I'm not going to be able to do this. I don't get this math stuff at all. This is not how my brain thinks.'"

With the support of tutors and a dedicated study center on campus, however, the lessons began to add up.

"She came in one day and said, 'You know, it's beginning to make sense,'" said Frimoth. "She went on to focus on math, transferred to a four-year school, got her bachelor's and then went right into her master's degree, and now she's a high school math teacher."

While single mothers finding enrichment thanks to Lives in Transition is a story heard regularly around the college's halls, the program is open to all men and women.

Those in South Clatsop County won't have to travel far. After a yearlong absence, Lives in Transition is returning to Seaside.

The program went on hiatus when the previous instructor moved away, Frimoth said. Recently, Shelly Alford, who

has taught the curriculum in Astoria, was hired to revive the classes at the college's South County campus in Seaside.

"We are planning to offer the classes beginning spring term, which begins March 30," said Frimoth.

Lives in Transition is designed for adults interested in returning to college after time away from academia, regardless of age, financial means or educational background.

"We've had students in our classes as young as 16 and up through 75," said Frimoth. "We don't restrict ages in our program."

Some attendees come looking for a career reset.

"We have displaced workers, men from the timber or fishing industries who've come through our classes," Frimoth said. "We're also getting a number of veterans. They're coming back, and they have a G.I. Bill and they have no idea what they want. They

sort of find a grounding in the Lives in Transition classes because they talk about barriers and change and how to adapt and reconnect with the goals that we want in our life.

"These classes are really looking at what education is and what educational barriers are there for people and how to get around those barriers," Frimoth added. "We look at life barriers as well as educational barriers."

Frimoth sees two particular impediments regularly.

"Child care is a huge one and so is transportation," she said, "particularly here in our rural community."

Lives in Transition offers partial reimbursements for child care and transportation costs related to attending class.

It also helps with enrollment, exploring potential scholarships and securing financial aid. Frimoth acknowledged that filling out

financial aid forms can be scary.

"We sit down and help people go through them. And they're all done online now, and some of our folks don't feel real comfortable with a computer, so we certainly help them with that," she said.

Lives in Transition also assists students in setting goals before they embark on the program and continues that support once they arrive.

"There is a push on all college campuses that's kind of geared to that high school graduate who is coming in and wants to do their first two years here and then go off to a four-year college," said Frimoth. "And that's great. But there's this whole other group."

Lives in Transition helps on campus in myriad ways, from a designated resource room with computers to tutoring sessions, as well as the general camaraderie and positive reinforcement that

comes by embarking on the journey with others.

"We have coffee and couches and computers and places to hang out and do homework with other people and other students who have been through Lives in Transition," said Frimoth. "It becomes a real cohort group here."

There's another leg up: Completing the program earns a student up to six college credits toward a degree or certificate.

"The classes are free, which is a gift from the college," said Frimoth. "The college believes in the program because our students, if they decide to go to school, do really well because they have the additional support."

For more information about the program, visit www.clatsopcc.edu/student-resources/student-support-services/lives-in-transition-lit-overview

WINGS conference gave local woman a boost to return to school

WINGS from Page 1A

"A woman got up and was talking about being a single parent and reaching a kind of plateau in her life where she didn't know what to do with her life," Soares added. "She told her story, and I felt like I understood what she was saying."

The effect was profound and immediate.

"She told her story, and that's when I realized that I wanted to go back to school," Soares said.

WINGS encouraged Soares to attend Lives in Transition, a sort of sister program of Clatsop Community College designed to help men and women return to school after a prolonged absence.

"The classes that they teach include stress management and life transitioning," Soares said of Lives in Transition. "It was like being in school, but it was also teaching you how to go through a big transition. You work through all of that, and there's a lot of trigger moments in the classes because they do focus on stress and how to deal with it and how to cope."

As well as helping her square away all the paperwork, — applications and financial aid — Lives in Transition also helped Soares regain the rhythm of returning to class. She got used to showing up a few times each week, on time.

"It was wonderful," she added. "I enjoyed it very much. Going to Lives in Transition made me look forward to going to school full time. As soon as I got about two weeks into the Lives in Transition program I knew for a fact that I wanted to go back to school."

Soares arrived on campus initially planning to study criminal justice, but found social sciences more to her liking. She also found math rather difficult.

"I was really bad at math," she said. "But I had a wonderful math teacher, and I actually finally started understanding it."

At the time, nearing the completion of her associate's degree, Soares was also pregnant with her third child.

"I actually went into preterm labor and had to go

If you go

WHAT: Wings conference
WHEN: 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Saturday, March 7
WHERE: Clatsop Community College, Columbia Hall
WHAT: Explore your educational opportunities in this one-day conference hosted by Clatsop Community College, AAUW-Seaside and AAUW-Astoria.
COST: The conference is free; free lunch and childcare are provided.
REGISTRATION: Visit the WINGS website, www.wings-clatsop.com/Home.html for information and registration, or call Pat, 503-717-1852.

to the hospital for a week," she said. Soares took her math homework with her, doing it in a hospital room.

"I didn't want to take an incomplete or anything and lose what I was learning," she said. "So I insisted to my teacher that I wanted to finish the class out. He was pretty shocked about that."

After wrapping up her associate's degree at Clatsop, Soares transferred to Eastern Oregon University, where she delved deeper into psychology and sociol-

ogy, and in turn, the trauma of her abuse.

Soares had a hypothesis that a lot of the damaging effects on children don't appear until adulthood. "As children grow into adults, these effects damage the way they're able to function in society," she said.

She worked that hypothesis into a research paper, which became her final project. It also granted her peace of mind.

"I used my experience to create data that can be used for people to learn from and with that came a lot of closure for me," Soares said. "That was one of the major things that was affecting my life."

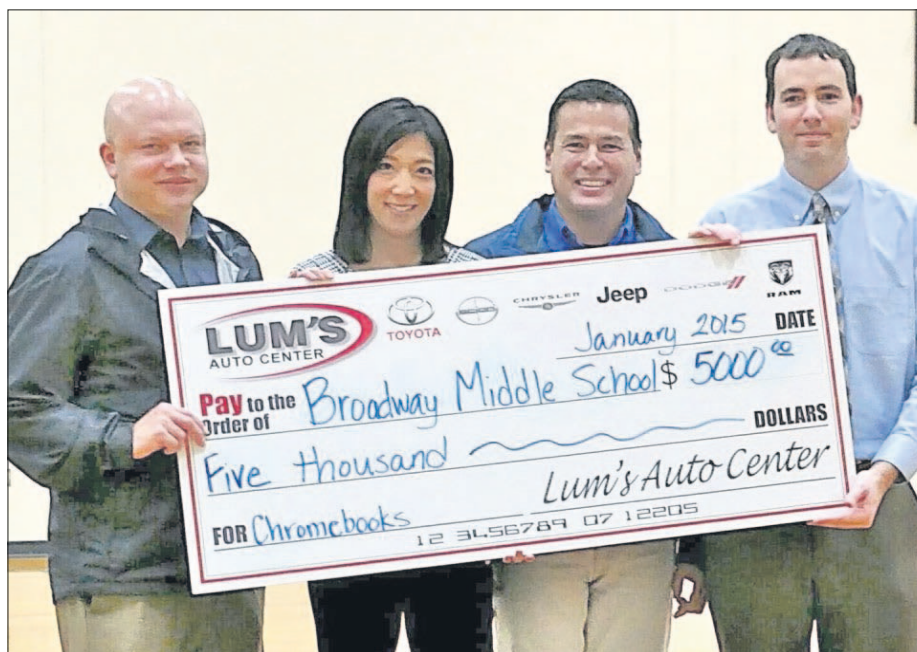
"So the ability to go to school and turn it into something else, it has been major," she added. "It has made an impact on my life that I can only explain so much."

Nonetheless, Soares is clear: WINGS helped get her to where she's at.

"Just going to that one conference, receiving the plethora of information and support and the openness, and how friendly and welcoming all the people were, it really made me feel like I had found my community," she said.

"It really made me desire to do more. Hearing those different stories and hearing that they had faith, it made me realize that I wasn't stuck and that my life wasn't stagnant, and that there was so much more that I could do."

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Lum's Auto Center and Toyota Motor Sales recently presented a \$5,000 check to Broadway Middle School students to improve technology-based learning and development. This year, Lum's community giving is focused on children, education and health/wellness. Broadway Principal John McAndrews said the technology will help to improve proficiency in math and increase access to coding programs for the school's newly established Lego Robotics team. Pictured from left are: Justin Tuebner, finance manager at Lum's Auto Center; Lori Lum Toyooka; John Toyooka; and McAndrews.

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