ROCKY NOW

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

Rocky Now: Keeping our friends and supporters informed about what's new and exciting at Rocky Mountain College

All about our students

Annie Anseth has always pursued her dreams, making them reality.

PHOTO: Courtesy Miss Montana USA

If you have a dream, go after it, encourages Rocky Mountain College sophomore Elizabeth "Annie" Anseth. Her history demonstrates she is someone who pursues her interest with commitment and passion.

Even as a little girl, she was a dreamer. Her dad, Alan, and older brother, Andrew, remember that she dreamed of being a model, even as a pre-schooler. She would change into different outfits during the day "Not because they were dirty. Just to wear something else," she laughs.

Annie dreamed of being a dancer, too. When she was three years old, she started performing on stage, evolving into an accomplished dancer through high school, learning tap, jazz, hip hop, lyrical and ballet. Her room was soon adorned with trophies.

In school she dreamed of being a good student. She impressed her mom with her superior grades, graduating from high school with honors and earning a scholarship to Rocky.

She also dreamed of being a cheerleader and became known for her jumps, flips and high-flying cheers.

This year, Annie pursued another dream, becoming Miss Montana USA 2010. The 19-year-old elementary education major found time to pursue that dream even while serving as a student ambassador, Battlin' Bears cheerleader, and winner of the Newcomer Student Award.

To help young people achieve their dreams, she hopes to serve as a role model. Her new dream is to encourage young people to stand up to bullying.

Annie will compete for the title of Miss USA, televised live on NBC, on April 18, 2010, at Planet Hollywood Resort in Las Vegas.

Design: Monica Forsberg, Artcraft Printers

Inspired by the 2009 Battlin' Bears Men's Basketball National Champions, this year's BTBJ theme celebrates all our champions -- students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends.

Larsons Named BTBJ Honorary Chairs

A couple who have been pioneers in the health insurance industry and leaders in the community will be the Honorary Chairs of the Rocky Mountain College Black Tie Blue Jeans Scholarship Benefit, Friday, Nov. 6, 2009.

Rick and Nicki Larson co-founded Employee Benefit Management Services (EBMS), Inc., in 1980 as a way to administer a self-funded health insurance plan they designed for a Montana manufacturer, launching one of the Northwest's first and foremost Third-Party Administration (TPA) companies. Over the past 30 years, EBMS has created a system that provides cost effective plan management through integrated management programs for hundreds of clients located in Montana and throughout the United States.

"We're honored and delighted to have been asked to co-chair this important event, as we join members of our community to celebrate the Champions and raise support for student scholarships. As parents of two RMC graduates, and business owners who have hired RMC graduates for key leadership areas in our company, we are intimately familiar with the exceptional value of a Rocky education," Rick Larson said.

While building their business, the Larsons also sought ways to build a better Billings, serving on a number of non-profit boards, including Rocky Mountain College, St. John's Lutheran Ministries, Ronald McDonald House of Billings, Ronald McDonald Charities of Montana, Billings Symphony Society, and the Western Heritage Center.

Photo credit: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

Rick and Nicki Larson have been named BTBJ Honorary Chairs for the Nov. 6, 2009 event, celebrating "Champions."

(Please see **Larsons** *on back page)*

Insider

Our Outstanding Faculty Unravels Knotty Problems

When I was a youngster in the Boy Scouts, one of the toughest merit badges I sought to earn involved learning to tie knots.

I studied the diagrams in the Boy Scout manual that showed segments of rope contorted into lanyard and cleat hitches, eye and back splices, and the old "rabbit comes out of the hole, goes around the tree and back in the hole." (I recall the hints, but still cannot recall the name of that knot.)

I twisted rope for hours and came up with an amazing array of knots, just not the knots I needed.

And then an Eagle Scout stepped in to help me. He didn't have to, but he noticed my perplexity.

"If you're willing to stick around after the meeting, I'll help you with those knots," he said.

With his patient demonstration and his sharing in my desire to succeed, I learned the knots. I earned the prized badge.

That same mentoring and guidance is what I think is so valuable at Rocky Mountain College.

It's a case of what prospective students don't see is what they get. In fact, what they may not see may be the most important thing here.

Every college can show you pretty campus photos, smiling students, and colorful events. Many tout academic excellence and certain outcomes, like finding employment or entry into graduate school.

At Rocky Mountain College, we're proud of our students, professors, campus, opportunities and outcomes, too.

But, what separates us is the excellence of our faculty as teachers and guides. They are the ones who unravel the perplexing knots that our students face with some academic challenges.

They are also the ones who excel at integrating different disciplines. Ethics can be taught in philosophy class, but, at Rocky, it is also related to business. Mathematic principles apply in education classes. Art and music have a role in history, but also in environmental science.

If you're on campus you need only listen to students who describe how important that integration of studies becomes. Beyond the new experiences and educational avenues, is the shared community of professor and student.

Listen, for example, to Kara Graetz, RMC' 04, describe the difference Communication Studies Professor Vickie Christie made in her life. Dr. Christie, through her involvement with the International Radio and Television Society, helped Kara apply for a special summer fellowship program. Picked from more than 2,000 applicants, Kara was chosen:

"I spent the summer living, all expenses paid, in an apartment in the East Village of New York City, working as an intern and field producer for WABC Eyewitness News, and building relationships with some of the top journalists and media figures in the industry. As Fellows, we were directly in front of all major media leaders, from the CEO's of the major networks, to Hollywood directors. No door was closed," she said.

Listen to Jesse Murphy, a 2007 summa cum laude graduate and President's Cup winner, when he talks about the difference Religious Thought Professor Jay Cassel made in his education:

"Dr. Jay Cassel expects his students to call him Jay. That's maybe not a major thing, but it helps. If you're going to encourage debate in the classroom, as he does, arguing on a first name basis keeps the debate academic and less acrimonious. He insists on the first day of class, that his mission first and foremost is to 'teach you to learn.' The discipline of self-discovery that his students learn, the shattering of old thoughts and thinking anew, can be a turbulent time in one's life. When the need arises though, Jay is there."

Listen to Nicole Nilson, now a pathologist in Tennessee, discuss the impact Biology Professor Claire Oakley had on her life. She not only taught her courses that eventually resulted in her entering medical school – something nearly 90 percent of Dr. Oakley's students succeed in doing, she also mentored her in other ways:

"I was only 17 years old when I first came to Rocky. Dr. Oakley took me to the grocery store and taught me how to shop. What college could you go to where your professor took time to take you grocery shopping and taught you how to budget your money and buy healthy foods?"

Listen to Dave Shumway, a 2007 magna cum laude graduate, talk about the importance of Economic Professor James "Doc" McDowell:

"It wasn't just in class that you learned from 'Doc.' You got a genuine Western experience, thanks to 'Doc.' His wild game feast at his ranch was a great introduction to Western life. His annual Christmas tree trimming was another one. Going to his ranch rounded out educational experiences."

Of course, "Doc" has been appreciated for a long time. Our former RMC Board Chairman Jim Almond says if not for "Doc" McDowell, he would have never accomplished anything important in life. "Doc" kept him focused when he attended Rocky in the 1960s.

These are only a few of the testimonials I hear from students every week. They praise Dr. Cristi Hunnes for bringing to Rocky the technology of nuclear magnetic resonance, which resulted in a cover story in the national journal, Chemistry & Engineering News; Mark Moak, who is such an outstanding teacher, he was honored with a national educator award by the General Synod of the United Church of Christ; Kayhan Ostovar, who helped organize a "BioBlitz" in Yellowstone National Park that resulted in national news coverage and the discovery of more than 1,000 new species; Professor Dan Hargrove, who directs the RMC aviation program, inspires all his students, as represented by Brandon Templeton, a 2008 summa cum laude graduate, who explains, "Before I even ventured to Montana as a freshman, Dan Hargrove was on the phone with me for over an hour, helping me figure out the daunting task of scheduling classes and understanding college life. From that moment, I had a good feeling about Rocky."

These are really only a handful of examples of what our faculty achieves with our students. In the coming months I will share about RMC's outstanding programs and professors. They really are what make Rocky exceptional. These are the exceptional teachers unraveling the knotty problems for our students.

Best regards,

Michael Mace, RMC President

Focus on Faculty & Staff

RMC Leads BioBlitz in Granddaddy of All Parks

During the first weekend after classes started this fall, Kayhan Ostovar, Rocky Mountain College assistant professor of environmental science, took students to Yellowstone National Park to work with more than 125 scientists, researchers and other students that converged for the first "BioBlitz" to take place in the Park's 137-year history. By the end of the day, 950 species were reported; a number that grew to 1,100 as the specimens were more carefully examined. In the next few months Ostovar predicts the number could reach 1,300, as laboratory analysis and DNA work are completed on the collections.

"We had a very diverse team of scientists composed of regional experts from local institutions as well as researchers from Harvard, the University of Missouri, California, and even students from Hokkaido, Japan. It was a great opportunity for Rocky students to work alongside international experts," said Ostovar.

Ostovar, who organized the first BioBlitz in Montana in 2005, was recruited by the National Park Service as the primary organizer of the event. Last year Ostovar developed and ran a new statewide three-year pilot study initiative by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) and the Natural Heritage Program to conduct surveys of understudied vertebrate species in Montana such as bats, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

Ostovar teaches a class in Biodiversity Survey Techniques and was able to help Rocky students land paid internships with MFWP last summer. One of these graduates now runs the field survey program for the state.

"There are many changes taking place in the conservation world that will create opportunities for students with the right training and experience," Ostovar said. "Jennifer Lyman (RMC professor of environmental science and botany) and I feel our students are better prepared for these new positions since we get them out into the field with hands on training, often more than many graduate programs provide. In the field can mean ongoing monitoring and research projects in local area streams and natural areas or trips to the Galapagos Islands or Costa Rica to study different ecosystems."

"We often think of biodiversity as something related to tropical forests, yet we also have biodiversity right here in Montana," Ostovar states. "The scientific community thinks we may lose half the species on the planet by 2100."

One would think that such a special park like YNP, called the "Granddaddy of All National Parks," has been well studied. However, much of the research efforts within the Park focus on what Ostovar calls "the charismatic megafauna" (elk, wolves and grizzly bears).

"We don't hear about their parasites and the insects that live with them and all the other species that actually make the ecosystem function," Ostovar said.

New records included organisms such as snails, tiger beetles, mushrooms, nematodes and even a new grass species found by Dr. Lyman.

Photo credit: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

Kayhan Ostovar organized the first BioBlitz in Montana in 2005 and was tapped this fall to conduct one in Yellowstone National Park.

Focus on Alumni & Friends

Sodexo Celebrates 50 Years with RMC; The Eagle Has Landed

Photo credit: Dave M. Shumway, RMC

RMC President Michael Mace was delighted to receive a check for $25,000 for student scholarships from Sodexo General Manager Curt Boehm.

When Sodexo wanted to commemorate 50 years of providing food service to Rocky Mountain College, the president who first signed a contract with the company was happy to attend a special commemorative dinner held Sept. 16. Dr. Lawrence F. Small was president in 1969 when the College elected to hire Sodexo, which, over the years, has been a solid supporter of Rocky, from sponsoring scholarships at the annual Black Tie Blue Jeans Scholarship Benefit to providing contemporary atmosphere and cuisine for the campus community. Sodexo's hors d'oeuvres at campus receptions always earn praise.

A $25,000 check from Sodexo, as part of the special 50-year anniversary dinner, capped a wonderful evening.

"Wow! was what I thought when they presented the check," said RMC President Mike Mace. "This was a very generous gift that will help our students."

Representing Sodexo were Thomas Post, Sodexo Campus Services, division president; Kirt Ingram, Sodexo Campus Services, senior vice president, operations; Pamela L. Smith, Sodexo Campus Services, vice president, operations, West; Richard Weigel, Sodexo Campus Services, district manager; and Curt Boehm, general manager, Sodexo at RMC.

Besides honoring Dr. Small, 25 year employees Doris Focht and Dale Elmore were also recognized for their faithful service.

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People visiting Rocky Mountain College's Prescott Commons cannot help but notice a large sculpture in the high-ceilinged entry foyer. Titled "Awoha-li," or Cheyenne for eagle, the sculpture is a gift from famed artist Ms. Pat Musick, a long time friend of the College.

"The eagle has landed," exclaimed a delighted Obert Undem, RMC director of planned giving, when the crate arrived bearing the eagle.

Ms. Musick, who often came to the campus from her home in Arkansas, always enjoyed her visits with RMC art professors, Mark Moak and Jim Baken. Critics across the country have applauded her work, with commissions sometimes in the range of $100,000.

(Please see **Alumni & Friends** *on back page)*

Larsons

(Continued from front page)

"The Larsons honor us by serving as our chairs this year," said Rocky Mountain College President Michael Mace. "They have been long time supporters of Rocky and they recognize how important our annual scholarship benefit is, enabling the College to provide help to hundreds of students."

This year's 22nd annual event will be held at the Billings Hotel & Convention Center, with silent and live auctions, a gourmet dinner and music by the Midlife Chryslers.

Rick and Nicki Larson have continued to innovate in the industry by promoting measures for cost control, quality management, and customer service at EBMS and have become one of the nation's leading administrators of self-funded group health benefits. They also extend these same benefits to their own company, which is headquartered in Billings and has regional offices in Portland and Denver.

Rick Larson is a nationally recognized expert and speaker on the topic of self-funding and has chaired the 400-member Society of Professional Benefit Administrators and the National Association of Employee Benefit Administrators (representing more than 4 million U.S. employees). Nicki Larson has led studies and moderated national programs for the Society of Professional Benefit Administrators and has been active in user groups advocating for industry software enhancements.

People interested in attending this year's BTBJ Scholarship Benefit may get tickets by contacting Shari VanDelinder, RMC executive director of development, 657-1173 / vandelis@rocky.edu. Information about the event, including auction items, is online at rocky.edu/alumnifriends/btbj.

Alumni & Friends

(Continued from inside)

Photo credit: Dave M. Shumway

The winged sculpture, "Awoha-li," adorns the wall in the Prescott Commons foyer.

Watching more than a dozen eagles from her patio inspired the eagle sculpture, she said.

Married to former astronaut Gerald Carr, Ms. Musick often incorporates some of her Cheyenne lineage into her work.

"Most of her work is in the format of wall sculptures, like our piece, and many are constructed using found natural materials, as is ours," according to Undem. "This is a remarkable gift from an extraordinary artist."

Coming Attractions

BTBJ 2009 Logo Design: Brandon Templeton, RMC

Midlife Chryslers

The 22nd annual event will be held at the Billings Hotel & Convention Center, Friday, Nov. 6, 2009, beginning at 6 p.m. There will be both a silent and live auction. The gourmet dinner will be followed by music from the Midlife Chryslers.

Auction items, including fine art, NFL tickets, jewelry, gourmet dinners, a chance to be an extra in a Hollywood film, and vacation packages, may be seen online at: blacktiebluejeans.com.

Shari VanDelinder, Rocky Mountain College executive director of development, said those who cannot attend are welcome to bid on auction items, via a proxy system.

WHAT: The 22nd Annual Black Tie Blue Jeans Scholarship Benefit

WHERE: Billings Hotel & Convention Center

WHEN: Friday, Nov. 6, 2009
6:00 p.m.
Registration, Cocktails, Photos & Silent Auction
7:30 p.m.
Dinner/ Live Auction
9:00 p.m.
Dance/ Midlife Chryslers

WEB: blacktiebluejeans.com

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