

# the TALON

The Community Magazine of Laramie County Community College



Editor In Chief  
Lisa Trimble

Managing Editor  
Troy Rumpf

Creative Coordinator  
Josh Thein

Publication Designer  
Nathan Huseth

Contributing Writers  
Laura Patridge, Troy Rumpf, Josh Thein

Photography  
Michael Smith

Send comments or inquiries to:  
Public Relations  
1400 E. College Drive, Cheyenne, WY 82007  
pr@lccc.wy.edu

President  
Dr. Joe Schaffer

Board of Trustees  
Bradley Barker III, Don Erickson, Jess Ketcham, Brenda Lyttle, Carol Merrell, Bob Salazar, and Wendy Soto

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**The Talon** is provided to the community and its stakeholders as an opportunity to share the stories of the students, alumni, employees, and others connected with LCCC.

The opinions expressed on these pages do not always represent the views of the administration or Laramie County Community College's official policy.



#### ON THE COVER

LCCC student Hunter Petsch walks down a staircase from the second floor in the commons area of the Clay Pathfinder Building.

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INSIDE

Agroecology students Jayson Serl, Maire Walsh, and Dallin Hughes set up class experiments in the campus greenhouse.



Greetings, and welcome to our most recent edition of The Talon. As I write this letter, I'm looking outside at what can only be labeled as a classic spring day in Wyoming: a mixture of budding trees and flowers and a flurry of snow struggling to stick to any perch that will offer a cool welcome.

In many ways, this is a great analogy to our year here at Laramie County Community College. Along with so many others in the state, we have grappled with the storm of challenges, many emanating from the economic downturn that has dampened the revenues for important services, such as higher education. However, below that flurry, there are wonderful things emerging here at the College, and this issue of The Talon will shine some light on just a few of those.

You are about to read stories of beautiful endings and the potential of great beginnings. We celebrate the career and retirement of one of our most impressive faculty members, Jeri Griego. Jeri has committed nearly 30 years to the College and has produced more exceptional accounting, finance, and business graduates than can be tallied. You'll also read about three of LCCC's most promising students — Christian Smith Borggaard, Renee Middleton, and DeAnna Nolan. If you want to be inspired for our future, getting to know these students will do just that.

We also highlight another successful LCCC alum in Chris Humphrey, who has become a respected and successful attorney here in Cheyenne. You'll read about the reach LCCC has into our community through partnerships with elementary schools. Finally, you can take a tour of our new Clay Pathfinder Building, through a pictorial that hopefully will entice you to come see the facility in person if you haven't had the opportunity to do so.

LCCC is your college – it's successful because of the support of our community, the dedication of our faculty and staff, and the deep commitment we have to helping our students succeed in their educational journey. We are fortunate to be part of this great enterprise.

On behalf of the faculty, staff, and trustees, thank you for supporting LCCC.

Warm regards,

Dr. Joe Schaffer  
President



LCCC auto body student Gus Alfaro of St. Helena, Calif., sprays sealant on a tailgate in the program's paint booth. Alfaro is one of 10 graduates from the auto body certification program this year.



**H**ave you had that conversation with someone new, maybe it starts off with small talk, casual chat? Suddenly you find yourself caught up in a discussion with more depth, more emotion, more intention than you expected.

That's what it's like talking to DeAnna Nolan, an English major at LCCC. Her talent shouts, and her presence whispers.

Kristin Abraham, English faculty and adviser for the High Plains Register literary magazine, feels the same: "In my classes, DeAnna has produced some of the best poetry I have read from a student at LCCC," she said.

"I can only begin to imagine the exciting ways her writing might continue to transform."

While in high school, DeAnna moved to Cheyenne from El Paso with her mother. When it came time for college, there were enough positives for her to consider LCCC, so she thought to herself "okay, I'll give it a shot."

And it changed everything.

She actually started as a geology major. Her love of rocks started young and has never left her; she still collects them. But she held a deep yearning, one that called for her to express herself as a writer.

Writing poetry since she was seven years old, the words give her an outlet that couldn't be found otherwise. "I want to explore. I'm trying to learn more about myself. It expresses me in ways that otherwise simply can't be expressed."

She started in Kristin's creative writing class, and they connected immediately. DeAnna joined the High Plains Register team, and she has been part of that staff since last spring.

She also works at the Ludden Library on campus and still manages to find time for her other true passion: dance. She works at Act Two Studios, where she gets to substitute teach in addition to helping around the studio.

Leslie Connaghan, the owner and director of Act Two, sees quiet strength in DeAnna as well.

"She has so very much to offer," Leslie said. "She's become someone I can count on to help me with so many things at the studio. Her kindness and humility set her apart."

Dance is a creative opportunity that relies implicitly on honing small nuances as part of the bigger performance, knowing that breakthroughs may be personal but understanding that they are invaluable to growth.

Which is a lot like writing.

"Writing may be hard, but I want that challenge. It's like ballet. I have these little goals, and when you reach them, it's like the biggest thing in the world." Her eyes let you know how absolutely sincere she is with this sentiment.

She's currently experimenting with narrative poetry and free verse. With the help of "amazing instructors" – including Kristin Abraham, Leif Swanson, and Dave Zwonitzer – she has found a voice that wants to speak and to be heard.

In fact, one conversation in particular is indicative of her experience at LCCC, one that she says was literally life-changing.

"I went up to [Dave Zwonitzer] one day after humanities class. And we started talking about the universe, and it really just struck me, and I was so angry. I don't know why I was so angry, but I had to

go back and talk to him. And I said 'tell me more about this, I gotta know,' and I was just all over the place, using a lot of hand gestures. When I was done, he said 'I think you're one of the smartest people I know.' And he said it with such honesty, no one has ever told me anything like that. I was blown away."

For someone who may not have always felt the confidence to do what she did, DeAnna's talents are undeniable. And it impacts those around her.

"She demonstrates a quiet leadership and strength of character," Kristin shared. "She sparks with creativity, insight, and empathy. Whatever she pursues, I'll always be proud to say I know her."

And what is next for DeAnna? She'd certainly like to be a writer, but she doesn't know. "Life has taken me down so many different paths that now I feel I can go anywhere and be satisfied.

"As long as I keep following what I want to do, it'll lead me to where I want to go. And I'm okay with that."

# Words for Life

A sparking photo effect highlights "The Dervish" by Lyle London, which sits just north of the Clay Pathfinder Building. The Art in Public Buildings Committee selected this piece from a number of proposals for the facility.



# HEART OF CAMPUS

THIS YEAR, THE NEW CLAY PATHFINDER BUILDING OPENED AT LCCC, GIVING THE COLLEGE AN EXCITING NEW CENTER FOR STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY.



Thanks to the generous support of Laramie County voters in 2013, a bond election allowed for the construction of the Clay Pathfinder Building as well as the Flex Tech Building on the LCCC campus. With additional support provided by the Wyoming State Legislature, the Clay Pathfinder Building opened in January 2017.

Named for John and Esther Clay, some of the most generous donors in LCCC's history, this four-story, 85,000-square-foot facility on the north side of campus serves as the front door for new and returning students and campus visitors.

Some of the building's highlights include:

- Student Hub
- admissions
- students records
- financial aid
- advising and career services
- counseling and campus wellness
- disability services
- testing centers
- LCCC bookstore
- a new coffee bar, Coffee 101
- ANB Bank Leadership Center
- Black Hills Energy Community Lounge
- University of Wyoming outreach offices
- science labs
- classrooms

"This is a big step forward for us. The building's design has helped us simplify services for students and visitors," said Judy Hay, LCCC's vice president of student services. "The open design allows great connection with our service areas for students, making it easy for them to make the contacts they need in a friendly and accessible way."

Hay noted that the entire building is designed to take advantage of natural light, making nearly every space day-lit.

Everyone in the community is welcome to stop by and enjoy all that the new Clay Pathfinder Building has to offer!

The Clay Pathfinder Building in photos (clockwise from top left): Student Melanie Gribble looks through a book in the commons area; Instructor Trent Morrell speaks to students in one of the new science classrooms; Students walk to the north entrance; "The Dervish" at the building's north entrance; Local high schoolers attend a new student orientation in the ANB Bank Leadership Center; Services on the first floor include Coffee 101 and the LCCC Bookstore; Jesse Seiden, student services specialist, offers help at the Student Hub; John Clay and President Joe Schaffer cut the ribbon during the grand opening and naming ceremony.



# BONA FIDE

Dedication, perseverance and exceptional judgment are qualities that spring to mind when considering what makes a first-rate lawyer. Those qualities may not have been at the forefront of Chris Humphrey's mind in his adolescent days, but with guidance and a new start at Laramie County Community College, he was able to excel. Now **Christopher G. Humphrey, P.C.** is written across the front door of his own law firm in downtown Cheyenne.

"People laughed at me," he recalls. "They said, you've got to be a good student, you've got to be connected and be willing to stick to something, can you do that?"

Chris remembered hearing things like that from some people close to him. By his own admission, those words weren't necessarily unwarranted given the rough go he had in high school, where he plummeted from a 3.5 GPA to a 2.0 in his sophomore year. Chris even dropped out and considered working fast food for the rest of his life.

With homeschooling, he got back on track and even re-enrolled in public school, graduating from Central High in 1999.

"I wasn't the best student. I was more of a 'too cool for school' guy at that point," Chris said with a grin.

He became interested in becoming a lawyer after getting acquainted with the courtroom atmosphere (professionally, that is). His mother translated for the federal courts, and he would tag along with her.

"I was meeting lawyers," he said. "And I thought, gosh, I'd look pretty good in a suit."

Fresh out of high school, Chris began volunteering and helping out in the federal public defender's office in Cheyenne, working for Larry Van Court and Jim Barrett. The duties were entry-level, but during that time, Chris said he got to see Van Court and Barrett in action. The main

takeaway from that opportunity was witnessing the compassion and empathy that they showed for their clients and how important that was to the job.

With affirmation that the legal profession was the career Chris wanted to pursue, he knew a long path of schooling was ahead. He said that LCCC was the clear choice to start, with a lower tuition rate than other schools, the benefit of living at home, and the ability to arrange his class schedule so that he could continue to work.

"LCCC was huge, if not the biggest thing that helped me," Chris said. "Instructors seem genuinely interested in your success. It's a caring environment that fosters academic and personal growth."

He decided to study English since that was the path his mentors had taken. He fondly remembered several instructors, but one that really stood out was Leif Swanson.

"Chris' enthusiasm for learning makes him one of the most memorable students that I've had the privilege to teach at LCCC," Leif said. "The essays he wrote were exceptional, and his comments were always insightful. Without a doubt, he's one of the best students to have graduated from our English program."

Chris credits his experience at LCCC for turning around his habits and giving him the tools that carried him through the remainder of his higher education days.

"I remember more about LCCC than I do about my undergrad at UW," he said. "I just fell in love with the small classes and the ability to meet with your instructors."

Graduating in 2001 with his associate degree, he transferred seamlessly to the University of Wyoming getting a bachelor's degree in English. Chris was accepted to

UW's College of Law, completing his juris doctorate in 2006. He returned to Cheyenne and landed his first gig right away.

"I was 26 and got a job as a public defender. I had to grow this beard just so my clients would listen to me," he said with a chuckle.

"It was a strange feeling, you come right back into your town, and you're practicing with or against someone that you went to school with or someone much older than you and maybe saw you grow up."

The strangeness passed, and he said that being a lawyer where he grew up is right where he wants to be. In addition to serving on area boards, he is even part of the team that oversees the LCCC paralegal program.

"I like to be involved. This is my community," he commented.

The law office of Christopher G. Humphrey, P.C., came to be in 2014 and has been on the rise ever since.

"The phones ring like crazy," Chris said. "We're a small firm, but I think it can only get better."

From high school dropout to being named a Top 10 Under 40 by the National Academy of Criminal Defense Attorneys for the past two years and a Top 100 Trial Lawyer by the National Trial Lawyers, the qualities of dedication, perseverance and exceptional judgment are now spot on when describing Chris.

People even told him that he wouldn't go anywhere at LCCC. But he strongly disagrees with that fallacy. "You make out of life what you put in. LCCC helped me."





# A FOND FAREWELL

Retiring after nearly 30 years at LCCC, Jeri Griego leaves a legacy of service to students and the community.

W

When you walk into Jeri's office, you can't help but notice how much she's got going on in her world. You get an intentionally chaotic visual representation of a life that is full of activity, of ideas, of action. Though she teaches business and accounting, a quick glance around this room tells you that so much more is happening.

And she never seems to let the smile leave her face.

One seemingly random piece of décor in that busy room may have the most significance: an airless mylar balloon.

"When I was adjunct faculty and someone retired, I was lucky enough to get that job," she said. Ed Mosher (a former colleague and eventual chair of the LCCC Board of Trustees) and his wife Edie bought her flowers and the balloon to celebrate.

"It meant so much to me. I wanted to teach at LCCC, nowhere else," she said. "I've kept that on the wall in my office to remind myself how much I wanted to be here, how much I wanted to do this."

That's one of the lessons she shares with her students: find something to hold on to. "Reflect back on graduation or an experience that got you to this point in life. That's what it's all about."

This spring, Jeri became one of very few faculty ever asked to speak at LCCC's commencement ceremony. That invitation was a reflection of the impact she's had, not just on the college, but on the community.

Jeri was born and raised in Cheyenne, and studied at LCCC. She even shot competitively on LCCC's now-defunct rifle team and earned recognition as the top female shooter in the state. She laughs recalling that "the coach offered a free steak dinner every time we got a perfect score."

After leaving with her associate degree, she headed to the University of Wyoming where she earned a Bachelor of Science in accounting and her MBA soon after.

Though she began her professional career as an internal auditor for a bank holding company, she worked as adjunct faculty for LCCC for more than eight years. In 1996, she began full-time permanent teaching.

Not surprisingly, the instructor then is quite different than the instructor now.

"I used to write all my lecture notes on yellow paper and memorized it like a script. That's how I started!"

Since those early days, she has won faculty of the year honors three times and been

invited to speak at national conferences. Looking back, she's accumulated an impressive history of work.

"But the thing I'm going to miss the most is working with students," Jeri shares. "I'm going to miss that inquisitive energy. Trust me, I learn from them too."

That said, her legacy may be equally valuable in what she brought to LCCC in community service.

"Jeri's a master of serving students," Ed Mosher said. "She's dedicated to student development beyond the classroom, especially in service learning."

Jeri acknowledges that her grandfather was probably her biggest life mentor. "He taught me from a very young age that part of being a citizen is to figure out how you can give back to the community." She remembers pulling her wagon, going door-to-door to collect items during the Cuban missile crisis.

"I was preaching to the neighbors about the importance of underground bunkers," she acknowledges with a hearty laugh, "I was seven years old!"

As a faculty member, she went to a conference that explored the concept of service learning, and she fell in love



with the possibilities. “I saw right away how I could match management and service learning. Students could see what it was like to help a nonprofit agency and still practice principles of management.”

While she started incorporating that idea into class, she also came across the opportunity to apply for a grant through the American Association of Community Colleges. It was the first time she had ever applied for a service learning grant, and in 2006, her efforts meant that LCCC was one of only eight community colleges to get the award, worth more than \$100,000. Soon, the campus was embracing service learning as part of higher education’s responsibility to students.

She says her philosophy was to change the culture of LCCC so that it was one of giving. Student engagement passed to the rest of campus, and Jeri recalls that 29 faculty members in 58 courses incorporated service learning as well.

One of Jeri’s highly successful projects has been The Pantry, which started a few years ago in cooperation with the former instructor of social work classes, JoLene Klumpp. The Pantry provides food and other necessities to students who may not have the

money to eat or who may not have access to dining services.

“Students were hungry. Being hungry affects your ability to study, it affects all kinds of things,” Jeri said.

The Pantry is run entirely on donations, including food drives. People also provide cash donations to help the team purchase items.

According to Jeri, an average of 60 students use The Pantry monthly, and they can use it twice a week, no questions asked. All they need to do is provide their student ID.

“We don’t want anything to be a stumbling block,” she said.

Another recent venture was the LCCC Community Garden, where a large area north of campus was dedicated to individual gardening plots that anyone could use. While there were some logistical issues in its first few years, Jeri hopes that this project can find its footing and thrive.

But some of the greatest service learning impact comes from the projects that are a required part of her classes. Initially, some students had hesitation about the projects, but now it’s grown into something that benefits the community.

“It relates directly to the importance of working together in teams, building trust with people they might not even know,” Jeri said.

Even online students in such places as Afghanistan and Japan have to take part. “People work globally, not always in the same settings as their co-workers,” she said.

While the projects have benefited numerous people, some of the biggest changes come in the students themselves. At the end of the semester, they write a reflection paper about the experience.

“It’s amazing, they’re almost like thank-you letters: thank you for making me do this, thanks for pushing me out of my comfort zone,” Jeri said.

She shared the story of a 19-year-old student, who admitted that she had never even looked at a homeless person in the eye. The student and her team decided to do something for COMEA, which provides support and resources for the homeless

community. They bought food, planned a menu, prepared and served the meal. Then they talked with the people after the service and heard their stories. The student told Jeri, “I always thought homeless people were just lazy. Why should we feel bad for them? But after hearing their stories, I knew this could happen to anyone just by health, loss of employment. I have a whole new perspective.”

Jeri added: “That’s why I do what I do. That’s why I love it. It builds understanding.”

On top of all this, Jeri was chair of the committee who wrote a proposal to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) to get online courses at LCCC. After at least a full year of intense work, she and her committee compiled a thorough package to get accreditation from HLC. This was in 2005, a time when online learning was relatively new, as was the idea of getting full degrees online.

“We wanted a blanket approval from HLC, instead of program by program,” she said. “It really was groundbreaking at the time.”

The team – and the college – got total approval.

Even as a self-declared people person, Jeri grasps the value online learning has to many people, giving them access to education. What started with just asking questions and digging through resources turned into an exploration of defining what makes a good online course and what the expectations are for instructors. This resulted in the tremendous growth of online

learning and hybrid courses at LCCC.

“It’s so interesting to see how things have evolved,” she said.

This dedication to the task, this work ethic, is just one of the aspects that garners respect.

“Jeri was not just involved, she was embedded in all aspects of her job,” Mosher shared. “Serving on committees, leading the way in obtaining accreditation from HLC, facilitating program transferability. She is the epitome of the meaning for being a professor.”

As she looks onto the next chapter of her life, it’s worth a quick look back to see what brought her here. Jeri was married to Dave for 32 years, before his untimely passing in 2010. Though she has no children or pets (“or live plants” she adds), she has a tremendous network of friends that has supported her, becoming family in their own right.

In fact, it’s often with these friends that Jeri travels the globe. So far, she’s visited 48 countries, with more to come this year as she works her way through Europe.

“Jeri and Dave were our neighbors when my family moved to Cheyenne,” said Jo Haley, an architect now based out of Texas but who remains close friends with Jeri.

Jo knew that the couple did a fair amount of international travel, which Jeri continued even after Dave’s death. “In 2016, she asked if I would go with her to Cuba. It was an



awesome experience to travel with Jeri!”

Every time Jeri traveled, she thought about how it could impact her students.

“It gives you a different way of looking at things. It gives you a spirit of adventure, the idea of getting out of your box, which fits well with the ideas of management,” Jeri said.

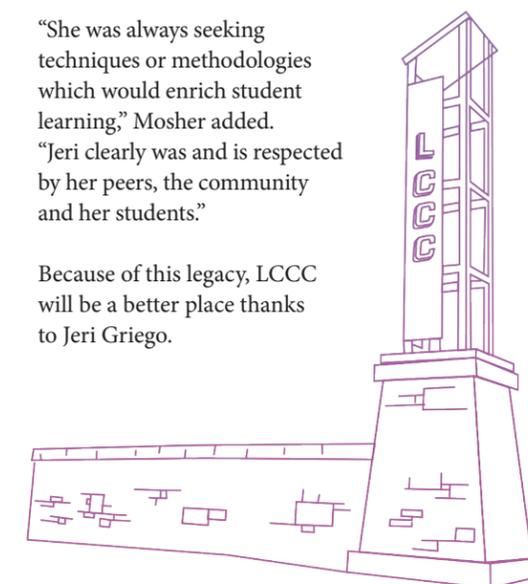
Even to this day, she incorporates stories about her trip to Cuba in her class discussions.

“The people had such a spirit of entrepreneurship across the country, and it had been squelched for so long,” she said.

Jeri embraced the people and their culture, wanting to learn more and help in any way she could. It’s no different than her approach to teaching at LCCC for nearly 30 years.

“She was always seeking techniques or methodologies which would enrich student learning,” Mosher added. “Jeri clearly was and is respected by her peers, the community and her students.”

Because of this legacy, LCCC will be a better place thanks to Jeri Griego.





LCCC art student Scott McHodgkins uses chalk to draw with Macy and Christopher on the sidewalk north of the Fine Arts Building.



Most days, it's not just college students you'll find on the LCCC campus. In fact, some of the biggest smiles come from the youngest visitors when they step foot on Golden Eagle territory.

**“ I want to come back here!  
I will be as good as possible.  
I want to earn it again. ”**  
Travis



LCCC equine studies instructor Lanac McDonald, left with students in the Arena.



Student Trinity draws with chalk near the Health Science Building.



Admissions team members Sarah Hannes and Nick Marlin have lunch with students.

“College students just study and eat and study.”

Brayden and Abe

“It’s awesome to not only hear students talk about their LCCC visit, but also that they want to go to college. Our students are given a tangible look into their futures,” Rochin said. “These visits are opening up their futures, giving them a future goal that might not have existed before.”

At each visit, Sunrise students share what they’d like to be, including doctors, police officers, veterinarians, gymnasts, singers, basketball players and more. For these students, the opportunities are truly limitless.

“We hope to expand their opportunities and help them realize that college is for anyone and everyone,” said Hannes.

“This is probably the best partnership we could ask for. It’s a great resource that we’ll keep building,” said Sunrise Elementary Principal John Broda. “It shows that LCCC is a community resource.”



“I want to be a vet. I like animals.”

Raegan



“This is my dad’s school.”

Alex



Students at Cheyenne’s Sunrise Elementary School are learning what it takes to go to college. Sunrise and Laramie County Community College began a partnership in November 2016 on a monthly program to reward students who are “caught” by teachers, staff and substitute teachers acting safe, responsible and respectful at school. Students from each grade are selected each month for the excursion to LCCC.

The program was developed by the elementary school’s TOPS (which stands for Tiers, Olweus, PBIS on Steroids) committee in an effort to improve student behavior throughout the school and in turn build a better atmosphere for learning. Once they developed their idea and reached out to LCCC, Director of Admissions Sarah Hannes noted, “This concept quickly made me realize that we needed to partner on this, and by working together, we could open the doors to the future of these children.”

And it’s working! Linda Rochin, behavior intervention specialist at Sunrise, said referrals for poor behavior are down. Students are excited each month to see who gets to go to college.

What does a day at college look like for these students? They arrive in time for lunch in LCCC’s Dining Room. Students get to pick from all the lunch options, including pizza, burgers, mac and cheese and, of course, self-serve ice cream. Following lunch, students interact with current LCCC students to find out a little more about college life.

While the activities vary, Sunrise students have played sports with LCCC athletes, completed a mannequin challenge, visited the horses in the agriculture facilities, and drawn outside with art students. Of course, they all leave with an LCCC gift, such as a backpack.



Students hold up LCCC pennants in the Clay Pathfinder Building.

# A New DIRECTION

Learning that it's never too late to start over

Life's journey can be full of twists. Paths you never knew existed suddenly become visible for the most curious of reasons. Though the trails may have moments of darkness, sometimes the light becomes a point of strength.

Such is the case with Renee Middleton.

In the midst of a difficult introduction into the medical world six years ago through her husband's struggle with cancer – a valiant battle which ultimately ended his life – and then her own fight with the same disease, Renee did a little soul-searching.

In that time, she found a new career path she wanted to take: healthcare. She had already spent 31 highly successful years working in marketing, the last 26 of those at Taco John's corporate office in Cheyenne. She loved her work as the company's vice president of marketing, but the healthcare field called to her.

A lifelong student, Renee frequently took LCCC courses with cancer, she found herself taking anatomy and physiology classes. And she wanted to learn more.

It's not easy to move from one field to another. Renee first would have to be accepted into the LCCC nursing program – one of several areas of study in LCCC's School of Health Sciences & Wellness – and succeed at many challenging courses and clinicals, but she also had to cope with her husband's passing.

So Renee took a year to grieve, then made plans to get her college application in order. She started in LCCC's nursing program in January 2016.

Even though there is an age gap between Renee and many classmates, she feels accepted. Jennifer Anderson, director of LCCC's nursing program, said, "Renee is actually the representative for her class, which is a position voted on by her peers. She has such strong leadership skills."

Renee also finds that her marketing background is helpful with nursing. She can present information in a way that persuades people to make a positive change for their health.

"And I'm getting to actually help people," she said. "That's truly satisfying."

Renee will graduate with her associate degree in nursing this December. She's also working on her bachelor's degree through the University of Wyoming. She added, "LCCC does a phenomenal job of creating a bridge to getting a bachelor's."

What does Renee say to people who want a change in their life?

"Go for it. Start steps today to make that happen. Hold yourself to something. Believe in yourself."



# ALL THE WORLD'S A

# STAGE



Accents and voices. Keep on your toes, because Christian Smith Borgaard does these often (and well) in the course of a conversation. He's a natural showman, though it wasn't always a given that his calling would be to trod the boards.

"I'd never taken a high school drama course. I didn't think it was taken seriously enough, so I did community theatre, I did things on my own, I studied and read," he said.

But coming to LCCC and taking part in the theatre program opened his eyes.

"I had no idea what a drama course consisted of until I came here, so I was concerned it would be *'now you must become the greatest actor in the world and you will become art and everything wonderful'*," taking on the persona of an aging out-of-touch British actor.

Jason Pasqua, theatre instructor at the college and director of numerous LCCC productions, was the one who gave clarity to the challenge of acting.

"His approach was *'let's figure out more about you, see how you can become truthful in acting.'* That blew my mind," Christian said.

Jason's style is intentional. "I've always prided myself on my approach, doing quality shows, strong collaboration as an ensemble," he said. "Christian is a part of that, part of culture where good things happen."

Christian has taken leading roles in the past two LCCC productions: Tom in the Tennessee Williams' classic *The Glass Menagerie* and Everyman in Pasqua's own adaptation of *Everyman*. Those roles earned Christian two separate nominations for the opportunity to compete for the Irene Ryan Scholarship at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. After the first nomination, Christian said that several colleges expressed interest in recruiting him to continue schooling there.

"But I don't want to. I love this too much. I don't want to go to a college program where I'm peeling imaginary bananas," as he deliberately mimes the activity that has become a stereotype of odd acting classes. "But I feel very honored."

By staying, he'll also be able to get his associate of arts in theatre from LCCC. This program option has returned and will be available starting this fall.

"With students like Christian and others, we now have the ability to do different kinds of plays," Jason said. "It expands the range of literature that can be done at LCCC."

With at least another year to go, Christian hopes to strengthen his acting skills. "I'd like to show that I've gone from the guy who's like *'okay, I kinda know how to do this, how to make my voice sound funny,'* to being able to get a script in old English, being able to sort it out, to find the meanings of the lines. Once you know the meaning of the words, the intention..."

He trails off and breaks into a quiet, introspective version of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" monologue, thoughtfully considering each word.

Christian keeps busy with his education, his job, and his work on various productions, but he's found that LCCC gives him the chance to thrive in a way that he couldn't anticipate. "Whatever type of learning

you want to have happen, happens. The environment nurtures all kinds of educational paths. I didn't know that until I came here."

He's keeping his post-college options open, but feels like he needs to be in Los Angeles. He has trepidation about such a move ("Call me a Wyomingite," he says) that turns into a playful improvisational bit as a westerner in the big city.

Christian's considering California because his true passion lies in film. "I love what the medium can do and how it brings a whole new characteristic to storytelling. With film and CGI, you can be anywhere, you can be anyone, you can do anything."

Even the recent production of *Everyman* integrated film, something that was received well by audiences and reviewers.

Not surprisingly, the conversation shifts back to the thrill Christian feels when he's exploring his craft. "You know what it's like to walk in someone else's shoes. You learn how to be everybody. It's hard to hate people when you are them. It's a whole new level of understanding. That's why I act."



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