

An award-winning magazine that shares LCCC's success stories

LARAMIE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# THE TALENT

volume seventeen  
spring/summer 2009



HOY

**We're getting greener with this, our first online Talon!**

In an effort to keep from cluttering up your mailbox and to cut back on spending, we at Laramie County Community College are doing everything we can to reduce our printing output. You could say we're going green in more ways than one – by saving our precious resources and by spending our money more wisely.

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Photo by Ty Stockton

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**LARAMIE COUNTY  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

## on the cover

Bill Keenan graduated from LCCC in 1994  
and is now a pharmacist at Hoy's Hospital  
Pharmacy. Photo by Ty Stockton



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of the College

The College continues to progress and grow, despite the pending statewide budget reductions. I know you all have heard about some of the budget challenges the State of Wyoming faces, including as does the Wyoming Community College Commission. As to Laramie County Community College, we have worked diligently on efficiencies and revenues to meet the Governor's "net 10% percent" mandate. We

have met with faculty, staff, students and the Board of Trustees. We believe we have a sustainable plan that has as minimal as possible impact on our campus.

Despite the "bad economic news," we continue to look to the future. As many of you know, because many of you were there, we recently dedicated the new Health Science building. What a phenomenal building it is! The various components of the building, including the ubiquitous technology, the simulation center and the classrooms, demonstrate the College's focus on learning and students. If you have not had the opportunity to tour the building, please let us know. We will schedule a time to take you through.

As to programming, we continue to seek ways to accommodate the needs of the Community and the region. The Wind Energy program continues to be one of the star programs. Students began their first courses in August 2008. We plan on enrolling another 24 in the fall 2010 cohort group with another 24 students in the January 2009 cohort group. And the demand continues.

Also, in January 2010, we will be initiating our online Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) to Registered Nurse (RN) program across the state. The nursing faculty have been extremely diligent in developing this educational opportunity to LPNs in Wyoming. Their first cohort group will be greeted by an organized program that will allow them to complete the RNship where they are with some clinicals in Cheyenne and in their own communities.

And there are many, many more wonderful things happening at Laramie County Community College. We will keep you updated. Keep watching the website.

Overall, Laramie County Community College continues to focus on learning and students, no matter whether they are or what program, both credit and or non-credit, they are in. We are extremely excited about what is happening at the College. Please stop by, say hello, take a tour of the new and renovated facilities, and see what changes are occurring. I believe you will be thoroughly impressed.

Thank you for your continued support of and commitment to the College and what we do, and we hope that you will continue being a part of our growth and progress.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrel L. Hammon".

Darrel L. Hammon, Ph.D.  
President



According to a 2008 survey conducted by the Center for Digital Education and the American Association of Community Colleges, LCCC ranked first in the nation among mid-sized community colleges for its Smart™ classrooms, online services for students, online course management systems, scheduled technology upgrades and faculty and administrative technology to support online students.

# Medicine Man

LCCC alum Bill Keenan has found success behind a pharmacy counter

By Ty Stockton



It's been 12 years since Bill Keenan set foot on the Laramie County Community College campus, but he still feels a connection.

Keenan, who is now a pharmacist and part owner of Hoy's pharmacies and NorthStar Infusion pharmacy, has come a long way since he started attending classes at LCCC and the University of Wyoming in 1980. He was an employee of Union Pacific, and he says he took classes whenever he was furloughed or had time off.

He wasn't entirely sure what he wanted to do when he "grew up." He says he changed his major several times when he was living in Laramie from '81 to '85. He started with sociology, moved on to psychology, then thought he would like computer science better. He says he took most of the computer science classes LCCC offered from the time he moved back to Cheyenne in '85 until '90, when the railroad launched a program to reduce crew sizes. He finally had the time he needed to return to school full-time.

"I returned to LCCC with the intention of getting a business degree of some sort so that I could enter railroad management," he says. But a course he took made him change his mind again.

"I took a course in human anatomy to fulfill a credit requirement and became fascinated with this course of study," he says. "I began to research careers that would utilize this type of information. I shadowed some x-ray technicians and decided not to apply for that program. Someone suggested that I take a general aptitude test, and one of the areas that the test suggested was pharmacy. I found out that LCCC had a pre-pharm program and

that UW had a Bachelor of Pharmacy Program. I spoke with as many pharmacists as I could and decided to go for it."

He left his career with the railroad and began chugging down this new track. He graduated from LCCC in '94 with an associate of science degree in biology, then from the University of Wyoming in 1997 with a bachelor of pharmacy.

He says LCCC made the transition easy. "The college had a phenomenal success rate in placing students in the highly competitive School of Pharmacy," he says. "Chemistry classes at LCCC consisted of hands-on experience with instruments that no undergrads touched at UW. With smaller class sizes and access to instructors and equipment, I felt that my training was equal or usually superior to any student entering pharmacy school from another institution."

The instruction wasn't the only benefit. Keenan met his wife in his first year at LCCC. He also says he got a lot of help financially at the community college.

"I received a scholarship from LCCC that essentially paid tuition for my first two years," he says. "And the aptitude testing and career guidance was a great help, too."

But Keenan jokes that his education might not be over yet.

"I look at the catalog every semester," he says, "but I haven't taken a class since 1997. It's about time to make another career change, so who knows?"

If Keenan's your pharmacist, don't worry. He says as long as it took him to decide on his current career, he won't be switching tracks soon. ❖



Photo by Ty Stockton

# Reviving a lost art

By Dava Greenlee

## Bill Dinneen's memory lives on through writers' series



Temple Grandin spoke at LCCC as part of the Bill and Marietta Dinneen Writers' Series. Photos by Melonie Jones.

In the early 1990s, a group of volunteers and friends of LCCC shared a vision. Their dream was to see the college bring students and the community together through diverse cultural experiences, sponsored by businesses and individual donors through the LCCC Foundation.

The program began simply, with a music workshop sponsored by the Bank of the West in 1994. Since then, the generosity of community members and local businesses has brought more than 60 nationally recognized speakers, artists and musicians to Cheyenne through the LCCC Cultural and Community Enrichment Series. Several series have been endowed by businesses and individual donors, beginning with the Esther and John Clay Summer Watercolor Workshop. This February marked the naming of the 10th endowed series in the program: The Bill and Marietta Dinneen Writers' Series.

A member of the LCCC Foundation Board from 1988 - 1992, Marietta Dinneen was a part of the original team of volunteers who worked to develop the Cultural and Community Enrichment Series program. Now, two decades later, Marietta has accepted the honor of having an endowed series named for herself and her late husband, Bill.

The writers' series was developed in 2001 to sponsor lectures and workshops at LCCC by local and nationally known authors, including Robert Bly and Robert Pack. The Dinneens were among several contributors to the series, and when Bill died a year ago, Marietta wanted to honor his memory with a larger donation. The duplication of her generous gift by the *Matching the Spirit* campaign allowed the endowment to be completed, ensuring the continuation of the Writers Series indefinitely.

The series was officially named for the Dinneens on February 10, prior to a presentation by Temple Grandin, author of several books and associate professor of animal

science at Colorado State University. Diagnosed at age 3 with autism, Grandin shared her stories and insights about living with autism to a standing-room-only audience.

Marietta accepted the renaming of the Writers Series with characteristic humility – "I wish they'd think of something else to call it!" she confided. But she is passionate about the series and explained why she chose this one to endow.

"The written word is important to preserve – not only for history, which is one of my loves, but for our day-to-day communication," she said. "Writing is something that is becoming neglected with all of our text messaging – it's becoming a lost art." She read from an article quoting a lecture given by Abraham Lincoln in 1859: "Writing – the art of communicating thoughts to the mind, through the eye – is the great invention of the world . . . great in enabling us to converse with the dead, the absent, and the unborn, at all distances of time and space."

Honored to have the opportunity to be a part of the Cultural and Community Enrichment Series, Marietta expressed gratitude to the LCCC Foundation for making the series possible. "I don't think people realize what foundations do for institutions of all kinds," she said. "LCCC, the Foundation, and the Cultural and Community Enrichment Series are things I think Cheyenne should be very proud of." ❖

# A BETTER FUTURE

## FEATURE STORY

By Ty Stockton

# ENGINEERING

CHEYENNE – Heading off to college is a big step for anyone. Recent high school graduates, veterans leaving the service, single parents ... No matter what path a student takes to higher education, the first steps are always the hardest.

Now imagine coming from a home where college isn't considered important. In fact, even a high school diploma is thought of as frivolous. Nobody in your family has ever gone to college, and only a few of your relatives have plans of finishing high school.

That's where Marc Miller comes from. He didn't have anyone with whom he could talk about going to college. His father has had a good life, despite lacking a high school diploma, much less a college degree. Time spent trying to get a piece of paper with your name and a school logo on it, in the elder Miller's estimation, was time wasted.

"There was no one I could relate to," he says. "It seemed impossible to go to school, but I was bored with construction."

Marc saw college as a gateway to myriad possibilities. He had been doing trim carpentry since he left school after the 10th grade in Ohio, and he had even started his own business. He had a list of contractors who called him when they needed trim or cabinetry done, but he was starting to lose interest in his work.

He saw an advertisement in the newspaper one day calling for applicants for a kitchen design job. With his experience sketching out room layouts and installing cabinets, he knew he was more than qualified for the work. Unfortunately, the employer wouldn't even consider applicants who didn't have at least a bachelor's degree. That's when it hit him: He needed a college degree. But first, he was going to need to get his GED, or general educational development.

Marc had gone to a private Christian school in Ohio. "They weren't particularly excited about higher education," he says. The school only offered classes through the 10th grade, and it didn't give its students

any help transferring to public school to finish their education. For Marc, the book was closed. He entered the working world when he was 16 years old.

Ten years later, he reopened the book. He enrolled with ACES, Laramie County Community College's Adult Career and Education System, to complete his GED. And complete it he did. When he took the qualification test, his score was the highest in the state.

After looking into costs for LCCC and a few other colleges and universities, he decided to try LCCC for a year, at least.

"There were no requirements for freshmen to live on campus," he says. "I had just gotten married, and I could stay at home, work part time, and still go to school."

In his final year at LCCC, Marc was the president of Phi Theta Kappa, the international community college honor society. Through that organization, he has worked on the Relay for Life committee, and he organized the event this year. He has also served as a senator and the treasurer for the Associated Student Government of LCCC. He doesn't just attend college; he lives it.

Despite his accomplishments, which could make it look like he had no trouble adjusting to college life, Marc says being a first-generation college student can be intimidating, but community colleges give students the opportunity to ease into school, rather than jump into the deep end of a university.

He's ready for that deep end now. Next fall, Marc will continue his quest for an environmental engineering degree at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. The university is a great fit for him, he says, because it houses a research facility in the third-greenest building in the world.

Marc is now leaning toward earning his Ph.D.

"Engineering professors aren't being replaced as fast as they need to be," he says. "I want to work or teach in the energy field. I really think there's tremendous potential for clean and renewable energy."

He's come a long way since leaving school after the 10th grade. But judging by his past success, it's clear that there's no stopping Marc Miller. ❖



**Marc Miller didn't finish high school, but he earned academic honors at LCCC**



## Alexander Mikhaylov



Alexander Mikhaylov, who is originally from Kirovo-Chepetsk, Russia, graduated this spring and received his associate degree in Economics and Finance. Next fall he'll be heading south of the Wyoming border to study economics with an international emphasis at the University of Colorado

in Boulder. While attending Laramie County Community College, Alex was an active member of Phi Theta Kappa and was selected as a 2009 Coca-Cola Bronze Scholar, an honor that only 150 students from across the country can claim.

## Nancy Nichols



Nancy Nichols has been a full-time math and statistics instructor at Laramie County Community College for three years. She teaches "everything from beginning algebra through calc III, and pretty much everything in between." She earned her bachelor's degree from Nebraska Wesleyan University and her

master's from Kansas University. She says her favorite part of teaching is working with the students.

## Arlene Lester



Arlene Lester will celebrate her 20th anniversary as a Laramie County Community College employee in July, but her tie to the college began as a student. She graduated with an associate degree in applied science in 1989, then started working here in the physical plant. Several job titles later, she has been the facilities and

events program manager for the past 12 years. As her title suggests, she schedules just about anything that happens on campus – from credit classes and the rooms they take place in to the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds Air Show each year during Cheyenne Frontier Days.

"By getting a degree here I surely saved a good chunk of money that I would've instead spent on the university. In addition, the classes were also very informative.

"Classes that I took here challenged me, and now I feel that I gained expertise in fields I was completely unfamiliar with before.

"LCCC helped me decide on my major, and now I can attend a four-year university with confidence knowing what I want to become.

"LCCC gave me confidence in myself and taught me to help others without expecting direct rewards.

"My economics teacher, Jeff Shmidl, advised me to apply for a tutoring position, but when I applied, I wasn't hired, due to insufficient funds. Nevertheless, I still helped many people out with their economics homework and walked them through the chapters. As a result I did not make any money but I did make friends, which mattered the most."

"It's always a challenge to help students understand – math especially. Maybe one of the biggest challenges about that is their preconceived ideas of it; their attitudes. I'll take my statistics class as an example. Usually the first day of a statistics class I look out and see terrified faces or some anger that they have to take that class at all. That's the first thing I do in a class like that – I try and help them to understand that it's not all of the horrible things they've heard, and I try and make it as painless and maybe even as enjoyable as possible.

"In all my classes, I always try and keep it light. I try and use a lot of humor. I try and make it so that it's more of a team atmosphere in the whole classroom. I'm not so much up there telling them everything I know as I'm trying to coach them, you know, helping them understand what they need to understand to get through the class.

"The best class I can have is one where everybody's in it, everybody's working together, and they're all trying to help each other."

"We try to be a one-stop scheduling place," Lester says of the facilities and events office.

"I really love my job, and I love the college. I believe so much in community colleges. This is the place for people to start their education.

"I like the educational atmosphere. I like that we do serve the community, and in this area we particularly serve the community. I can say, 'yeah, that's a great event and we're going to help you with that.'

"The summer is great, because I get to work with people more, but fall is always exciting when everybody comes back, and it's a new year, and we're getting all the campus events going."



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*- Chelsea Beauprez, Student*

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