



RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT ARTS AND RECOGNITION GALA

STARTING BLOCKS SWIM PROGRAM GETS KIDS INTO THE WATER SAFELY



Southern California, kids and water. It's hard to imagine one without the others.

Yet not every Southern California kid has dipped toes—much less floated or swam—in a pool or the ocean.

For nearly 1200 local children, the opening of the Olympic-standard Riverside Aquatics Complex at Riverside City College was their first chance to don bathing suits and flip flops, grab a towel, and make a SPLASH... learning first aid, water safety, and basic swimming from skilled instructors.

A three-year-old program called Starting Blocks made things possible, its foundation laid by a community-public education partnership that has raised more than \$50,000.

Tilden-Coil Constructors came up with the concept.

In August 2010, Tilden-Coil Vice President Dayne Brassard watched a news special about six siblings in Louisiana who lost their lives in a tragic Red River swimming accident.

Earlier, Brassard and Tilden-Coil President Brian Jaramillo had discussed the concept of a swimming program for underprivileged youth.

"We felt it was a way to address concerns of the RCCD Board of Trustees and members in the community that the new aquatics complex not be simply a venue for well-to-do

elite swimmers," said Brassard. "But it was a great idea that really didn't go anywhere until the news story provided a catalyst.

Tilden-Coil first talked to the college district and the RCCD Foundation. Both organizations partnered with Tilden-Coil. Needing to reach out to students in the community, the Starting Block planners contacted the Riverside Unified School District.

"Interim Superintendent Mike Fine had greater ideas. He helped the program become what it is today," Brassard said.

What started out as a simple request for busing students from schools to the aquatics center quickly evolved. RUSD identified two schools—Longfellow Elementary and Jefferson Elementary—that operated on an extended year several weeks into the summer thanks to a HEARTS grant program.

"Participation in Starting Blocks was a great partnering with those two schools and their extended year Hearts activities that went on in the morning," said Fine.

Both elementary schools serve predominantly low income neighborhoods. RUSD officials knew from research studies that children from low income families and those learning English as a second language don't have the same opportunities as many other children to learn to swim

and receive water safety instruction.

As plans for the program came together, community sponsors stepped up to help. Joining in the effort were Ronald McDonalds House Charities, the Spiel family, the Kiwanis Club of Riverside, American Medical Response, the Optimist Club, Riverside Public Utilities, the Provident Bank Charitable Foundation, the Assistance League of Riverside, the Cutter Fund, and other private donors.

"This program brought our community together in an amazing way," said Amy Cardullo, director of the RCCD Foundation.

Starting Blocks easily met the RUSD's original goal for students.

"We believed that our kids were going to have a great recreational opportunity in the summer that they otherwise wouldn't get," Fine said, and that they would come away with a new skill...in this case a life-saving skill. Starting Blocks has far exceeded our expectations."

At Tilden-Coil, Brassard sees a sun-bright future for the program.

"We look forward to Starting Blocks continuing for many years. Not only does it teach these kids how to swim and be safe in the water, it exposes them to a college campus. I believe they will remember that forever."

EDISON INTERNATIONAL BACKS COLLEGE STUDENTS INTERESTED IN STEM CAREERS

degree. The program is a way for Edison to help make college possible for more young people, while attracting qualified job applicants and possible long-term employees.

In 2013, Edison committed \$25,000 each in scholarship support at Moreno Valley, Norco and Riverside City colleges. Earlier, the company had been a major supporter of the college district's Passport to College program and the RCCD Foundation's participation in the statewide Osher Scholarship initiative.

"We are very excited, we just kicked off the Edison Scholar program this year," said Region Manager Ray Hicks. "We want students to understand that it's more than a grant, it's a commitment to them...one that we hope returns a benefit to both students and our company."

Hicks, who serves on the RCCD Foundation Board of Directors, is an RCC alumnus. He started at the College in 1981, thankful that Edison reimbursed most of his college expenses.

That experience fueled his desire to give back.

"I was very fortunate to receive educational reimbursement from my employer, something that most students didn't have, and still don't today," he said. "Through the RCCD Foundation, Edison can have a similar impact on students who would not otherwise have these opportunities."

Opportunities make the difference, Hicks said. During his 33-year career with Edison International, he has progressed from a meter test man to his current position in public affairs management. He traces a significant part of his success to education, and he sees college and Edison as a good match.

"Edison has programs to help with energy efficiency, help to design homes, and I would like to see more of these programs available to students—either through a workforce type arrangement or something hands-on so that they're going to come to us with an understanding of the electrical utility business."

Respected Educator Found the Right Stuff at Riverside City College

Kathy Wright Selected as 58th Alumnus of the Year



High school senior Kathy Wright flirted with the idea of becoming a policewoman, but a commanding officer on the home front arrested those plans.

"My dad just looked at me and said, 'You won't be doing that.' So that idea went down the drain," Wright said. "But I also wanted to be a teacher and that's what I wound up doing."

After walking in the first graduating class from John W. North High School in 1966, Wright enrolled at Riverside City College, intent on transferring to San Diego State University.

College was challenging, yet rewarding.

"I was learning way more than I had ever imagined was out there. College professors were a whole lot different. They expected more of you; you had to be more self-disciplined. I enjoyed getting that experience here at RCC."

In 1968, Wright and a girlfriend headed south. The two had worked hard and saved their money. They soon found themselves living in the SDSU dorms.

Both were 21 years old, the "two old people in the dorm." At the same time, they weren't at home anymore.

"It was one more step in growing and becoming adults," Wright remembered, but quickly added that the friends were smart enough not to refuse care packages their parents pressed upon them during home visits.

She loved San Diego and being on the campus but, in retrospect, she wouldn't have picked a university that had 25,000 students. RCC, however, always felt like home.

"I loved the Quad, and still do. It was beautiful and had a very comfortable hometown feeling," Wright said. "It was really good being here."

After graduating from SDSU, she took her first teaching job at an elementary school in Banning. Her next stop was in the Alford Unified School District, first as a teacher and then as an administrator.

"I had the good fortune to do a lot of different things at Alford," Wright said. "And through curriculum development and instruction I was able to reconnect with RCC, only this time as a colleague and a peer."

She found that the faculty measured up to the professors she remembered.

"I have a lot of regard for the faculty at RCC. They continue to do wonderful things."

Her colleagues and friends group Wright in that same category—a sentiment that she appreciates.

"A turning point for me was when I realized that as a teacher, what I did really mattered to the children," Wright said.

Two of her proudest accomplishments as an educator concern service to English language learners and the development of the International Baccalaureate program at Norte Vista High School.

"We were able to develop strong programs, ones that incorporated principles of equality and inclusion," she said. "For instance, almost a quarter of the whole school is engaged in the IB program; that's highly unusual."

But perhaps that type of success is not so unusual for someone who as a determined child enjoyed the basic idea of education.

"I loved playing school and always wanted to be the teacher," Wright smiled at the memory.

Now retired for six years, the former school superintendent stays involved in Riverside and RCC.

Her community service includes the Greater Riverside Dollars for Scholars, the Mission Inn Foundation, the Riverside Dickens Festival, the Assistance League, the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce, and the Inlandia Institute. She also serves on the scholarship selection committee for the RCCD Foundation and has established two family scholarships through the Foundation to help RCC students. Awarding those scholarships each year is one of the joyful things in her life, Wright said.

This year, she will be recognized as both Riverside Community College District's 58th Alumnus of the Year and as the recipient of the 2014 ATHENA Award.



Edison International's commitment to local communities put the company on the fast track to be recognized by the RCCD Foundation as its 2014 Outstanding Partner.

"Recognizing Edison International for its support and commitment to bettering education and our communities was an easy decision," said Amy Cardullo, foundation director. "They have consistently stepped up to partner with us to make new opportunities available to students."

Through the Edison Scholar program, the company supports students majoring in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM). Edison Scholars are able to apply for internships with the company after completing an associate's

GOLD SPONSORS



Dwight Tate



KAISER PERMANENTE

County of Riverside - Supervisor Marion Ashley

YOUNG ALUMNI TO BE HONORED

Solving Equations Equaled a Better Life

October 3, 1994, was a Monday. Sunny skies in Venezuela, with the mercury nudging 79°.

For Jesus Oliver, Moreno Valley College's 2014 Young Alumnus, the day was the start of a life-changing journey, one that would take him from Venezuela to Mexico City to California. A journey that also took him from a GED to a Ph.D.

And it was the day his father, Luis Oliver, died. At age 44.

"I knew everything was going to change," Jesus Oliver said. "Not only was I feeling the usual loss a kid would feel for his father, but I knew that my life was completely being turned upside down."

A well-known musician, composer and producer in Latin America, Luis was the third of the Oliver men to die of a heart attack. He joined his father and grandfather—both dead at 44.

"He was the central person that held our family together, he was the core, the center of that household," Oliver said. "He was a father to not just me, but to my uncles as well and the 14 people who lived in our household. He was the center of the galaxy at that moment in time."

Ironic that losing his "galaxy" opened a new world for Oliver.

"If you would have told me back then that everything that was taking place would lead up to this, I would have not believed you at all," he said.

His father's death, and eventually his mother's love for a U.S. citizen she met years later while working in Mexico City, changed Oliver's world. Today, he teaches mathematics at UC San Diego, having graduated from Moreno Valley College and earned multiple degrees, including a Ph.D. in pure mathematics from UCSD.

"When I found out we were moving to America, I was so excited," Oliver said. "This was a place I had only seen in pictures. It was so cool, such an active place where young people went to find themselves, to study... and party."

"College (in the U.S.) was a dream, I thought I'd never get to live it, and then suddenly someone tells me—hey, that not only you, but your brother (Sergio) is going to go to college in the United States. It was an amazing day!"

There was only one problem. Arriving in the United States with a less than a stellar report card and a list of classes that weren't accepted, Oliver faced having to re-enroll in high school. Instead, he earned a GED.

"My English was real shaky," he said. "They said I wasn't ready for college, but they said if I passed the GED test, I could go to college right away. A week after learning about the GED I took the test."

He started at Riverside City College a week later.

But it wasn't until enrolling in a math class at Moreno Valley College that Oliver found his true passion and career path.

"When I took that math class at MVC with Professor Sean Drake I remember thinking, well, Jesus, this is your chance to really work hard," he said. "I wanted to master the subject... which had been my worst subject in Mexico. I wanted to better myself as a person by being better at math."

Math proved magical for Oliver. "For me, it was quite magical," he said. "I studied five hours a day, every day then one day I didn't need to do five hours. Things started clicking and it was an amazing feeling to truly understand something." He scored straight A's, graduating with 76 academic units—a rarity for students coming out of a community college. Then he hit an impasse.



2014 Young Alumni of the Year — (l-r) Math professor Jesus Oliver (Moreno Valley College), naval warfare operational analyst Jonathan Trdan-Schmidt (Norco College), and International Baccalaureate program coordinator Shawn Marshall (Riverside City College).

LEGOS PLAY LEADS TO NAVAL WARFARE CAREER

Legos are one of the world's iconic toys.

For Jonathan Trdan-Schmidt, 2014 Norco College Young Alumnus of the Year, the interlocking plastic blocks gave him his start.

"Before I got buried in school, I was fascinated with Legos," Trdan-Schmidt said. "From there it progressed to tinkering in my parents' garage, working with my dad and eventually putting airplanes and rockets together."

Trdan-Schmidt still tinkers, but now it's on a larger scale as a Performance Assessment Force Development Assessment Operational Analyst at the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Norco.

At NSWC, he is part of an engineering team that gauges the fighting capacity of ships and aircraft, from unit to battle group level. Trdan-Schmidt is responsible for developing assessment standards, measurements, and analysis criteria for new missions.

Trdan-Schmidt, a graduate of Christian Heritage High School, says enrolling at Norco College allowed his career to take off.

"Norco College made it all possible," he said. "The classes were better taught, the faculty had better care for the students... meaning they had more concern for the students than at the university level. If you had a will to do it, you could. If you wanted to get into a class or talk to a faculty member, you could."

Although the college didn't have a lot of classes in aerospace fields, classes like astronomy opened the door, Trdan-Schmidt said. Since transferring from Norco College to Cal Poly Pomona and earning a degree in aerospace engineering in 2009, a lot of other doors have opened—though not necessarily where he had anticipated.

"When I went to school, I figured I'd get away from Norco, see the world...but here I am working two miles away from where my parents live," he said with a mock sigh, followed by a quick smile. "However, working at NSWC comes with a touch of pride, we truly do support our troops."

"When it came to thinking about the next step, it was terrifying," Oliver said. "I didn't have the money even for the UC application fee. But when I discovered the fee waiver, I decided to apply to UC Riverside, UCLA and UC Berkeley."

His fallback plan was to work full time, finishing school as money allowed.

Fortunately, UCLA had a better idea. Years later, Oliver's eyes widen as he remembers the day the letter arrived, offering him a full academic scholarship. To this day, the UCLA acceptance letter hangs proudly on his mother Olivia's living room wall in Ontario.

"First thing that comes to mind is just how incredibly lucky I was to have had the people who were in my life. Everything could have gone so differently," he said. "I can look back and see all of the love and help given to me. I can't help but think that it is my turn to help others achieve what they have dreamt about. I think my story is a story of miracles."

Trdan-Schmidt, just 29 years old, has strategized how to accelerate the development of hostile fire detection systems; pioneered an approach to incorporate war fighter feedback into a closed-loop analysis process; led the RASE 2012 post-experiment Data Analysis Working Group (DAWG) with industry and government participants; and developed Metrology Calibration Procedure Error Tracking, Monitoring and Reporting Software.

"I have had moments that I'm most proud of," he said. "However, I like to think that my career is still in process."

Part of that career takes place outside of his naval warfare duties. Trdan-Schmidt owns Tomorrow Aerospace, a company that specializes in the development of light-sport aircraft kits and alternative propulsion technologies.

"The problem with the small-aviation industry right now is that it is so expensive to enter," said Trdan-Schmidt, who is studying for his FAA private pilot license. "I see a light sport aircraft in the works, something people can approach and learn to fly."

And it appears that the sky really is his limit.

He would welcome the chance to travel to space and has been approached by space exploration companies. However, his education continues to be a driving force.

In 2011, he graduated from the United States Naval War College Post Graduate School as a commissioned naval officer, and won the Meyers Award for academic excellence. Currently, he's enrolled in the Naval War College's Joint Military Professional Education program.

"In five years, I'd like to be chasing a Ph.D. in aerospace and engineering," he said.

Until then, he remains busy working at the Naval Surface Warfare Center, and volunteering with NSWC's STEP, a program that introduces high school students to the concepts of engineering.

"Purpose in life is to make it count," he said. "If you have a chance to help someone, you do it."

Teacher Pushed Past Barriers

Shawn Marshall, Riverside City College's 2014 Young Alumnus of the Year, made the hard trek from a life on the streets to respected educator. Life was tough, but so was he.

"Growing up my mom battled to get us out of homeless situations," Marshall said. "She was tough and she helped teach me how to persevere. I learned that if you want something in life you have to be willing to work for it."

Despite the adversity, Marshall graduated from Norte Vista High School in 1995. A packet sent out from RCC's Riverside Scholars Program pointed him in a new direction.

"I applied and was chosen. My life changed from that point on."

Marshall plunged into the four-year scholarship program, which guaranteed two years at RCC and two years at the University of California, Riverside. At RCC, he enrolled in 18 to 20 units each semester and worked at In-N-Out Burger 30 hours a week.

"I had to work and go to school because we did not have the money to just go to school," said Marshall. "I thank RCC for influencing my career and life path. For me, it was a saving force when I really needed it."

Marshall went on to the University of California, Riverside and received his bachelor's degree in English. He left UCR knowing that he wanted to pay it (his success) forward. He immediately returned to his old high school to teach English and quickly took over from his mentor the same AP English Literature class that taught him the importance of rigor.

"My obsession has been breaking down barriers," said the young educator, who when he is not teaching or mentoring, collects toys, comics and other pop culture items—a passion he and his wife, RCC alumna Carmelle Marshall,

share through their website www.theconfluencecovers.com. "I think that in life it is easy for people to be in a certain place because of a demographic. I felt that Norte Vista was a place where I could make a difference."

District administrators saw potential in Marshall and offered him the opportunity to spearhead the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. For the next year he worked to create and share his vision of expectations and achievement for the underserved population of students. A lot of people doubted the program could be successful, but Marshall's belief in students and his ability to inspire and motivate them proved otherwise.

The Norte Vista High School IB program was approved in 2008 and today serves over 500 students each year. Many students start the program with less than stellar GPAs, but go on to graduate with a 3.5 GPA or higher and an IB certificate or diploma.

"I thrive on the word 'no' and enjoy helping students develop their path to success," Marshall said. "I tell them that there is always a way to succeed and pursue their education, no matter where they come from."

"The students who motivate me the most are the ones who believe the least. What we do is create an environment where students who were barely on track to graduate can compete next to those who will attend the Ivy League. It is rewarding to see our students excelling at universities such as Stanford, Cornell, Berkeley, UCLA, Boston and so many more."

Marshall's perseverance has led to many recognitions, including the Riverside County Site Support Employee of the Year in 2012, the same year the program was designated as the Riverside County Model of Academic Excellence. The Norte Vista program is the first high school IB program to be recognized as a Spotlight Program by the California Association of IB World Schools. Additionally, the program was recently chosen as a Riverside County Champion on the Rise for work in the community and was just added to the Washington Post's list of Most Challenging Schools in America. In March 2014, Marshall was chosen as one of the very first AP Advocates for the College Board.

"A big motivation has always been to not be in the situation I was in growing up," Marshall said. As a result, he would like to give back to RCC and collaborate in the near future.

"To me RCC is the most important of institutes in Riverside. It's the one place in the community that allows adults to restart and chase a dream. It never gives up on you."



THE 2014 ANNUAL RECOGNITION AWARDS & ARTS GALA

Thursday, April 24, 2014
5:30 pm

The annual recognition and arts gala event honors outstanding individuals in our community and showcases award-winning performing arts groups from Moreno Valley, Norco and Riverside City colleges. All proceeds support college performing arts programs.

Riverside Auditorium & Events Center
3485 Mission Inn Avenue
Riverside, California

Information (951) 222-8626

Only advanced ticket purchases available.

Pictured: Rod Piazza, 2013 Alumnus of the Year