OnPoint Community Credit Union and the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) has announced that six graduating seniors have won scholarships worth up to $10,000 each. All six are part of the 2023 OnPoint Community Credit Union Scholar Program and are double the amount of previous years’ scholarships. The program recognizes graduating scholar athletes and active school volunteers from OSAA member schools, receiving more than 350 applications.

One of the four winners of the 5,500 scholarships was Austin Baker of Bend High School. He was selected as the Oregon high school state championships’ title sponsor. Baker is a member of the National Honor Society. Baker will continue his education at Western University’s Pacific College of Osteopathic Medicine.

All graduating seniors who participate in OSAA activities were eligible to apply for a scholarship. The Scholar Program is part of OnPoint’s partnership with OSAA as the title sponsor of the Oregon high school state championships.

OnPoint selected winners based on letters of recommendation and personal essays about their community leadership, classroom success, and how participating in OSAA activities has helped them achieve their goals.

Central Oregon Community College’s (COCC) Center for Business, Industry and Professional Development (CIBPD) welcomes Dave Gotrjahn as a business advisor and Keith Sherrill as the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) coordinator with the Central Oregon Small Business Development Center.

Gotrjahn is a retired senior finance leader from Continental Airlines Company with over 34 years of experience. He has led program financial planning and analysis, budgeting, financial, capital and tooling, investor relations and estimating and pricing strategies. He has also developed long-range business plans and supported compliance and risk management activities for airline financial, sustainability, and manufacturing operations. He is also adept at lean manufacturing and process improvement activities.

As a volunteer (treasurer) for a nonprofit organization, he helped restructure the board to improve product and financial support for the same organization. He is currently providing financial mentorship at Habitat for Humanity for clients seeking home ownership.

Sherrill’s experience and hard work will be invaluable in recruiting and advising COCC’s small business owners through the Small Business Management Program, which is an annual hands-on coaching program for growing businesses. Sherrill recently moved to Bend with his wife, Grace, and their two children. He’s a Bend native who enjoys skiing, hiking, mountain climbing, golf and time spent with his adult children.

Gotrjahn holds a finance degree from the University of Washington, an MBA from Seattle University, and is a licensed CPA. He is an outdoor enthusiast who lives in Bend with his wife and enjoys skiing, hiking, mountain climbing, golf and time spent with his adult children.

Keith Sherrill is a veteran who trained as a U.S. Army Ranger and served as a special operations aviator. He earned a master’s degree in business administration, and following his military service, Sherrill attended an SBA “Boots to Business” transition program which led to his opening the award-winning HB Brewing in Mobile, Alabama.

Sherrill’s experience and hard work will be invaluable in recruiting and advising Central Oregon’s small business owners through the Small Business Management Program, which is an annual hands-on coaching program for growing businesses. Sherrill recently moved to Bend with his wife, Grace, and their two children. He’s spent some time running and visiting Bend’s dog-friendly trails and parks with Poppy, a “nutty” Cavalier King Charles.

Three more employees joined the Latino Community Association (LCA) this spring. By coincidence, all three have roots in Guadalajara in the Mexican state of Jalisco, and share a desire to help strengthen the Latino communities of Central Oregon.

Daniel Altamirano Hernández fills a vital role as executive administrative assistant, taking on HR, payroll, program reports and managing donations, and works in the Redmond office. Altamirano was born in Guadalajara, came to the U.S. at age five and grew up in Redmond. They graduated from Redmond High School and earned their bachelor’s degree in social work at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon, in 2019. After a gap year with AmeriCorps, they returned to Pacific University and completed a master’s in social work.

However, Daniel Altamirano Hernández is a “social worker at core” with a focus on macro social work — investigating the origins and impact of social problems — and social policy. They served as a policy intern and fellow with former Governor Kate Brown’s team. They worked with the houseless community and with low-income BIPOC students seeking a higher education. During the pandemic, they managed a team of community health workers. They joined the LCA team in April.

Claudia Ruiz Cervantes joined in an administrative position, working in the LCA’s Bend office. They grew up in Guadalajara and participated in school sports, festivals, music contests, theater, public speaking and student government. They began working in customer service at age 16. She pursued a career in computer science with a specialty in international business. Before coming to the United States, they worked as an executive in one of the most important banks in Mexico.

In 2014, Ruiz Cervantes and her children moved to Madras to live in a safer and more peaceful place. She worked in the food service industry, volunteering with LCA in 2019, and in 2022, she became a navigator in the ALD program (state aid for immigrants who lost work in the pandemic). In early 2023, she helped taxpayers prepare their returns, and in May, LCA hired her as an office assistant.

Estefanía González joined the Bend team as a part-time office assistant while she attends college. She was born in Fresno, California, and moved to Bend with her family in 2005. She graduated from Bend High School in 2021 and enrolled full-time at OCCC. She wants to get her AAOT degree at OCCC and then transfer to OSU Cascades and earn a bachelor’s degree in human development and family sciences. She looks forward to a career in social work, public health or health education.

González worked in a retail store before she took a job working with the ALD program at LCA’s Bend office in September 2022. She helped determine people’s eligibility for financial help from loss of work during the pandemic. When that program wrapped up earlier this year, LCA hired her in April to support the work of the Bend office.

The Oregon Veterinary Technician and Assistant Association awarded Beth Palmer, director of COCC’s veterinary technician program, its Veterinary Technician of the Year Award at the association’s recent statewide award ceremony. The honor recognizes “individuals who have gone above and beyond for the veterinary profession, our community and the people in it.”

The distinction singled out Palmer’s dedication to the profession, her tireless outreach efforts and the volunteer work she does with the Feral Cat Coalition, Central Oregon Cat Alliance and other low-cost spay and neuter clinics based in underserved communities. It also recognized her devoted work to COCC, where she has helped establish a robust two-year training program that currently holds a 100 percent veterinary technician national exam pass rate.

Before joining COCC as program director and instructor in 2013, Palmer spent 14 years as a certified veterinary technician. She has also worked in emergency animal medicine, shelter medicine and as a technician manager and trainer. Palmer earned an associate degree in veterinary technology at Portland Community College, a bachelor’s degree in professional technical education and instructional design from South Seattle College, and a master’s degree in education in instructional design from Western Governors University.

Erin Weber, a financial advisor with Sherpa Wealth Strategies in Bend, has successfully passed the rigorous Certified Financial Planner (CFP) exam. Weber also holds the designation of Chartered SRI Counselor, demonstrating her expertise in Socially Responsible Investing (SRI). Her dual qualifications serve as a testament to her dedication to guiding her clients towards their financial objectives while aligning with their personal values. Weber joined Sherpa Wealth Strategies in 2019.

Payne Appraisal Services congratulates Leanna Valdes for earning her State Certified General Appraiser license. The distinction recognizes individuals who possess a high level of professional development with an in-depth knowledge of the appraisal profession. Leanna Valdes has been an appraiser assistant with Payne Appraisal Services since 2019 and has been working hard toward her license. She has been a part of the Central Oregon community since 2009 and brings excellent research skills to this company. With 300 hours of appraisal class work and more than 3,000 hours of qualified work experience under her belt, she is well prepared to start serving the appraisal needs of Central Oregon as a certified general appraiser.

BendFilm welcomes Interim Executive Director Ann Witsil. Witsil has lived with her family in Central Oregon for more than 15 years and is thrilled to be working with the talented, professional BendFilm team and community volunteers, especially for this milestone 20th anniversary year.

As an organizational development consultant and interim executive director in both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors, Witsil has led diverse teams in the performing arts, social justice, and environmental arenas through transitions and growth. Previously, Witsil was an executive with U.S. Bancorp and with Nike Equipment during periods of business diversification and expansion. She is a lover and supporter of the arts — written, spoken, visual and performing — and thrives on exploring trails, rivers, wilderness and different cultures. Witsil has lived running her family’s tent business for 3 years. They moved to Bend in 2020 to be working with the talented, professional BendFilm team and community volunteers, especially for this milestone 20th anniversary year.
Compass Commercial Real Estate Services announces two new certified Commercial Investment Member (CCIM) designations for Kristie Schmitt and Grant Schultz. Brokers with the CCIM certification are recognized as experts in their field, specializing in financial, market and investment analysis. Both Schmitt and Schultz obtained this prestigious designation in April 2023 at the CCIM conference held in Boston. Their knowledge and professionalism throughout their careers, coupled with their attainment of the certification, further solidify their position as industry experts.

These participants come from a wide array of backgrounds and industries, and differing lengths of time living in Central Oregon. What they all have in common is a commitment to Bend and our region, and a willingness to work collaboratively to create a strong future for all. Over nine months, they spent more than 90 class hours learning about local challenges and opportunities firsthand from decision makers, and through interactive work. They additionally completed three impact projects outside of class hours and carved out time to connect and nurture their relationships with each other.


The Nancy R. Chandler Lecture Series recently received its first National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant, a $60,000 award that will be used to develop and host six humanities-focused presentations on topics of journalism, social justice, literature, art and other content. COCC’s award was part of a new NEH award category called Spotlight on Humanities in Higher Education, and it was one of just 30 such grants awarded across the country — COCC was one of only three community colleges selected.

The Loughlin Lecture Series, a COCC Foundation program since 1985, brings renowned speakers and experts to the region to deliver programming on a diverse range of educational and topical subjects, typically offered at a low cost or free to the community, and always free to students.

Celebrating the launch of the NEH’s recent funding cycle announcement, the grant represents one of just 258 awards presented this year by the organization, first started in 1965.

The Nancy R. Chandler Lecture Series of the COCC Foundation has hosted many distinguished speakers over the years, including Ndaba Mandela, activist grandson of Nelson Mandela; Lulu Garcia-Navarro, journalist; Jelani Cobb, writer and educator; and Maya Angelou, Pulitzer Prize-nominated writer and activist. The series was established by the late Robert W. Chandler Sr. to honor his wife Nancy.

COCC’s new grant will help launch a lecture series featuring well-known and esteemed authors with an interest in literature, art and other content, including such national figures as Yo-Yo Ma, who’s won 25 Grammy Awards and is a UN Messenger of Peace; and former Senator Marco Rubio, who’s written several books on politics and government. In addition, COCC’s grant will enable the series to host authors and literary figures from around the world, with speakers who are recognized as leaders in their fields.

COCC’s lecture series is a fantastic opportunity for community members to hear from and learn from these highly respected figures in the fields of literature, art and other content. The series aims to inspire and educate, providing valuable insights and perspectives on a wide range of topics.

COCC’s new grant will continue to bring together a diverse range of speakers and programs, further enriching the community and providing opportunities for learning and growth.