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**Belmont Optimist Club endows scholarships for Pueblo County PCC/CSU-Pueblo students**

**PUEBLO** – A gift of \$70,000 from the Belmont Optimist Club has endowed scholarships for second-year Pueblo County students attending either Colorado State University-Pueblo or Pueblo Community College. A gift will be finalized at a signing ceremony that will be held at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 26, in the Ryals Room at the Rawlings Library.

Optimist International is an association of more than 2,900 Optimist Clubs around the world dedicated to "Bringing Out the Best in Kids." Adult volunteers join Optimist Clubs to conduct positive service projects in their communities aimed at providing a helping hand to youth. With their upbeat attitude, Optimist Club members help empower young people to be the best that they can be.

Belmont Optimist Club President Arnie L. Carlsen said he hopes the scholarship will be the catalyst to help Pueblo County students reach their potential

"Tomorrow's leaders are today's youth. Our Club wants to reach out to our community to help our youth," Carlsen said. "We'd like to give kids an opportunity to find the nuggets and jewels within them and encourage them to overcome obstacles in their lives."

Dr. Rick Huff, Optimist member and an associate professor of accounting and computer information systems at the Hasan School of Business at CSU-Pueblo, doesn't want students to learn life's lessons the hard way. He often quotes American author and humorist Tom Bodett to his students, "The difference between school and life? In school, you're taught a lesson and then given a test. In life, you're given a test that teaches you a lesson."

Diane Porter, Executive Director of the PCC Foundation, said the scholarship will make a huge difference in many lives at the community college. "Having been in this position for the past

eight years, I personally know that many PCC students could not have graduated with a degree without the extra help from our donors.”

New awards shall be to second-year students at CSU-Pueblo and may be renewable for up to 10 semesters until graduation should the recipient meet and maintain eligibility requirements. To qualify for reconsideration in subsequent years, a recipient must maintain a 2.5 cumulative grade point average or higher. Graduate students are not eligible for the award. Financial need may be considered in the scholarship award decision.

Applicants at both colleges will be required to complete an online institutional scholarship application as well as and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application by the required deadline each year. Applicants also will be asked to express in a scholarship essay how optimistic they are about their future and explain the obstacles they plan to overcome in order to achieve their goals. To qualify for reconsideration, recipient(s) must apply annually through both college’s scholarship application process.

The scholarship at PCC will be open to all students who graduated from high school or received a general equivalency development (GED) program and are at least in their second semester at the college. Non-traditional students are eligible, and there is no age requirement. They must be taking a minimum of 12 credit hours and have a 2.5 GPA.

“Scholarships help students reach their goals and enable them to succeed,” said Porter. “The Belmont Optimist Club gift truly will make a difference because it will impact the future of many of our students.”

*Colorado State University - Pueblo is a regional, comprehensive university emphasizing professional, career-oriented, and applied programs. Displaying excellence in teaching, celebrating diversity, and engaging in service and outreach, CSU-Pueblo is distinguished by access, opportunity, and the overall quality of services provided to its students.*

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*Founded in 1933, Pueblo Community College is a premier teaching institution focused on providing academic and service excellence to help its students acquire the 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills needed to better their lives. An educational and technological leader, PCC fosters economic development and utilizes strong partnerships in the communities it serves through its Pueblo, Fremont and Southwest campuses.*