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Major donation gives huge boost to Fremont Campus expansion effort

CANON CITY – Plans for building an expansion to Pueblo Community College’s Fremont Campus here received a major boost last Friday during the PCC Foundation’s annual Donor Appreciation Dinner. Canon City resident Darryn Biggerstaff, while speaking about his late father Darryl, who was being honored posthumously by the Foundation, made a \$200,000 pledge in conjunction with Canon National Bank toward the Fremont Campus’ proposed expansion project.

With the pledge, Diane Porter the PCC Foundation Director, announced that there is now approximately \$400,000 for the Fremont Campus building fund toward the \$2 million needed to expand its current facility.

The expansion plans have reached the architectural phase, and conceptual drawings were presented to the Fremont Campus Advisory Council last week. The expansion design includes classrooms, a student commons area, faculty offices, and a stand-alone career and technical program space. Depending on the time needed to raise the development funds, the expansion could be done in two phases.

A Campus Expansion Task Force has been created and will meet Dec. 7 to study the expansion plan further and determine the feasibility of launching a capital construction campaign. Back in the late 1990s, a similar campaign raised \$1 million in seed money toward the construction of the current Fremont Campus.

The building opened in August 2001 and enrollment has risen dramatically since then, causing college administrators to use creative use of facilities and scheduling to accommodate classroom needs. The most recent PCC report shows that 820 students are now attending the Fremont Campus, an increase of 22 percent from a year ago.

“We were thrilled to hear Darryn’s announcement of his and Canon National Bank’s generous pledge,” said Jennifer Pierceall Herman, the Dean of the Fremont Campus. “Over the past couple of years, we have been working on master planning and on campus expansion options to accommodate our steady enrollment growth. His generosity, along

with other community donations received over the last few years, will really give us a jump start to our potential plans.”

During the past year, Walter Schepp, a retired Canon City businessman and currently a member of both the Fremont Campus Advisory Council and the PCC Foundation Board, donated \$100,000 to the College’s Building Fund because of his belief that every viable community should have access to quality higher education. Over the past few years, several donations totaling approximately \$100,000 have been earmarked for campus improvements. A recent gift of \$20,000 was received from Dorothy “Tiny” Striegel for scholarships and health care programs.

Individuals interested in contributing to the Fremont Campus Building Fund can write checks to the PCC Foundation – Fremont Campus and then send their donations to Jennifer Pierceall Herman in care of the Fremont Campus, 81320 W. Hwy. 50, Canon City, CO 81212. She also can be reached at 719-296-6100.

“The Fremont Campus was built on generous support from our community, and we are grateful to have continued support in order to provide educational opportunities for the citizens of Fremont and Custer counties,” Herman added.

Darryn’s announcement was made during an evening in which his father was being inducted into the PCC Foundation’s prestigious President’s Circle for his strong support of higher education in Canon City. Darryl, a long-time Canon City banker who passed away in 2005, chaired the committee that raised that initial \$1 million toward the Fremont Campus construction. His son is carrying on Darryl’s legacy.

“The main stimulus for the joint \$200,000 pledge is to celebrate and honor the philanthropic ideals of my late father,” said Darryn, who has been a member of Canon Bank Corporation’s Board of Directors since 2005. “Darryl W. Biggerstaff was one of the founders of Canon National Bank, and the Biggerstaff family is still a major shareholder.

“It is widely known that Mr. Biggerstaff was instrumental in making the Fremont County Campus of Pueblo Community College a reality. Not quite as well known is that Canon National Bank was also a fairly large contributor to the original building project,” he added. “ In this uncertain economic environment, the Biggerstaff family and Canon National Bank want our community to be reminded that philanthropic giving is necessary in all economic climates and can be of even more important during difficult times.”

Also inducted into the President’s Circle last Friday evening was the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, which has contributed close to \$500,000 to PCC to help it operate several programs and to fund student scholarships. Pierceall Herman presented Darryn with a commemorative crystal eagle, and PCC President Dr. J.D.Garvin made a similar presentation to Mel Otero, who was representing the Packard Foundation. Schepp and his wife Gloria were inducted into the President’s Circle a year ago.

The Donor Appreciation Dinner was held in PCC's Fortino Ballroom on the Pueblo campus to enable the PCC Foundation to thank its many contributors.

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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 21st 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.