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## **PCC pays tribute to 2011 top employees**

**PUEBLO** – Pueblo Community College began 2012 by first taking a look back at the previous year and honoring its top employees of 2011. During the Employee Recognition Breakfast that served as a traditional “welcome back” kickoff meeting, PCC honored Dave Edwards as Faculty of the Year, Shawn Gius as Classified Employee of the Year, Ross Barnhart as Administrative Professional/Technical Employee of the Year and Barbara Simms as Part-Time Instructor of the Year.

They were selected from a total of 65 nominations that employees and students submitted for the four awards. They signify what it means to go above and beyond one’s normal job duties in doing their best to make PCC a better educational institution.

Here is a brief look at the four award winners:

### **Faculty of the year – David R. Edwards**

Dave has served as the Fine Arts & Humanities Department Chair since arriving at Pueblo Community College in 1992. During this time, he has shared his philosophy of helping students, as he put it, “understand the value and importance of the arts in terms of the thinking skills people gain as well as personal enrichment.” He believes that his previous professional experience as both a magazine illustrator and a jeweler enables him to help students understand what it takes to be a successful professional artist.

A Pueblo native, Dave graduated from Pueblo East High School and went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Art Education at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, and a Master of Education degree in Community/Junior College Education from Central State University in Edmond, Oklahoma. It was while doing his student teaching in Jacksonville, Arkansas that Edwards realized how well he related to students, and while earning his master’s he came to appreciate the philosophy of community colleges and the types of students who attend them. “They are a special group of people with a hunger for new skills and knowledge,” Dave stated.

At PCC, Dave has served on several faculty committees and has chaired the Curriculum Committee, College Assembly and Faculty Council. In addition, he is PCC’s representative to the State Faculty Advisory Council for the Colorado Community College System and the Colorado Faculty Advisory Council for CCHE. He also is co-chair of the Art Discipline sub-committee for the Colorado Commission on Higher Education.

Edwards has won numerous awards for his jewelry, sculpture, photography and painting, and his artwork is represented in corporate and private collections across the country.

### **Classified Employee of the year – Shawn Gius**

Shawn is known at PCC for having drive, being dependable and helping students in his role as Administrative Assistant II for the Community Education & Training Division and the Alternative High School Diploma Program. He has worked at PCC for eight years, starting as a student assistant in the GED program and progressing as a work-study, hourly and part-time employee before being hired by PCC full time.

Shawn's excellent work ethic is a family trait that he adopted naturally. A Pueblo native who graduated from Pueblo Centennial High School in 1996, he delayed college and worked a number of different jobs in his hometown to help support a family that included his parents and six siblings.

He earned an associate degree in Criminal Justice at PCC and has continued his education while working. He completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology from Colorado State University-Pueblo and expects to graduate in the spring of 2013 with a master's degree in Criminal Justice from Colorado Technical University. Earlier this year, he augmented his knowledge by completing a three-month internship for the 10th Judicial Probation Office, which he described as "a great learning experience." Now 33 years old, his goal is to become a probation or parole officer and possibly teach as well, saying, "I like to work with people and get back them back in the community, especially students."

Shawn was a PCC Shining Star Award recipient in December 2007, and he serves on the advisory boards for the HOPE Bridge Project and the CETD & Pre-College Programs.

### **AP/T Employee of the year – Ross Barnhart**

Quality of life and valuing family have always been most important to Ross, who once moved to Seattle in 1992 without a job because, as he says, "I just decided I wanted to be there." He also returned to his native Pueblo in 2001 without employment because he wanted to be closer to his immediate family. "I always felt my job was not paramount to me as far as life is concerned," he noted.

Barnhart has served as Pueblo Community College's Learning Center Director since April 2007 and has worked at PCC for most of the past decade, previously as a GEAR UP program advisor, math instructor, Upward Bound program English instructor and an academic testing specialist. Before that, he worked eight years at the University of Washington as a research consultant, scientific programmer and systems analyst and did graduate studies work there in Biostatistics.

A Pueblo native, Ross was valedictorian of his class at Pueblo County High School and earned straight A's for four years, one of those coming in a typing class that he admits gave him fits and "almost cost him" his 4.0 GPA. He went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mathematics

from The Colorado College and a Master of Education degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration from the University of Vermont.

Besides being involved in several PCC committees including the Safety & Security and College Learning Council groups, Barnhart was named a Shining Star Award recipient at the college in February 2008 for going above and beyond his normal job duties. He also has used his expertise and interest as an officer or chair of several state and Pueblo organizations. His current passions are volunteer work, helping fund scholarships for PCC students, and long-distance cycling.

### **Part-Time Instructor of the year – Barbara Simms**

Over the course of 28 years, Barbara has been both a student and employee at Pueblo Community College. She completed programs 17 years apart, getting a certificate in PCC's original Cosmetology program in 1984 and an Associate of Science degree in Biology in 2001. She has been employed at the college since 1999, serving as both a tutor and Student Ambassador while doing her studies. Since earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and a Secondary Education teaching certificate in 2004 from Colorado State University-Pueblo, she has worked as an educational advisor in the TRiO Project Success program and a part-time math instructor.

Born and raised in Phoenix, Barbara has been a resident of Pueblo since 1977 and graduated from Pueblo East High School. She returned to Pueblo to seek her second associate degree after working in the auto dealership business in Pueblo and Northglenn for several years.

Married for 27 years and the mother of a 24-year-old daughter, Barbara has now embarked on a new journey at PCC after beginning a full-time job as a Department of Corrections liaison in the Records Office in December.

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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.*