Pat Kemp named Centralia College’s 2014 Distinguished Alumnus awardee

Pat Kemp, a man who holds responsibility for connecting people and delivering goods and materials throughout all of Alaska, is the college’s 2014 Distinguished Alumnus Award recipient.

Kemp, a 1973 Centralia College graduate, is the Alaska commissioner for Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF). The department is responsible for highways and roads, the state ferry system, airports, measures and commercial vehicle regulation, and design and engineering services. His responsibilities stretch from the rain forest of Southeast Alaska to the Ice Road link to Prudhoe Bay.

Kemp is the college’s 37th Distinguished Alumnus Award recipient and will be recognized during June 13 commencement day ceremonies.

“It is truly an honor to receive this award,” Kemp said. “I looked though the list of the people who have received this award and the list is impressive. It’s an honor to be included.”

Kemp was born and raised in Southeast Alaska, and graduated from Juneau-Douglas High School, located in Juneau, the state’s capital, in 1971.

“I was invited by (then coach) George Gablehouse to play basketball at Centralia College. I saw that as an opportunity to continue to play ball,” Kemp said. The fact that his grandfather was a railroad engineer for the Union Pacific and once lived in Centralia helped to cement the decision.

He came to the college planning on a teaching career, which would have followed in his father’s footsteps. He earned his Associate in Arts in 1973.

“I realized teaching wasn’t for me and that I wanted to go into civil engineering,” Kemp said. He had worked summers in Alaska as a surveyor, construction inspector and drilling helper, work he enjoyed.

He reset his goal, returned to Centralia College, and earned his associate degree in engineering, then transferred to the University of Washington.

“I was young and my time at Centralia College helped me get focused,” Kemp said. “I don’t think that as a 17-year old freshman I could have made it going straight to the University of Washington from high school. Centralia College was important as a transition college. My time there helped me build a great foundation and prepped me well for the university. Among other things I learned how to study.”

Kemp also met his wife, Becky (Rogerson), while both were attending Centralia College. The couple has been together for almost 40 years.

His success at Centralia College was passed on to his oldest daughter, who is a Centralia College civil engineering graduate, and is working in Juneau. The Kemps have two other children.

After earning his bachelor’s degree, the Kemps headed north to Alaska.

Kemp began his career with the Alaska Department of Highways in 1971 as a rear chainman on a survey crew. He began full-time employment with the Department of Transportation in 1977 and shortly thereafter became a licensed professional engineer.

During his first 30 years in the divisions of construction and preconstruction, he worked in management and design development of heavy construction projects for highways, airports, buildings, harbors and ferry terminals. He became a Preconstruction Engineer, the highest engineering classification in the state. He retired from the department in 2006 but in 2011 was invited back by Alaska Governor Sean Parnell to be the deputy commissioner of Highways and Public Facilities, and in 2012 was appointed commissioner.

Kemp oversees a department with a budget approaching $2 billion, with about 3,200 employees who plan, design, construct, operate, and maintain a very large multi-modal transportation system.
Leadership can often be defined by accomplishment. It is the mark of an individual who has created and set in motion an idea that has a lasting impact on others and society in general. Three men, each with a distinctive style of leadership, have met that definition in their leadership roles at Centralia College. They are Dr. Nels Hanson, Dr. Hank Kirk, and Dr. Jim Walton, three who have served as college presidents since 1966.

The three will convene for a Class Act on Monday, Feb. 24, beginning at 5 p.m. in the Wickstrom Studio Theatre, in Washington Hall, on the college campus. You are invited to listen in as these two former and the current presidents share memories of their time at the helm of the college. There will be opportunity for audience questions and answers.

Hanson, in 1966, was named the first president of Community College District Twelve, which is Centralia College. He served until 1981. Kirk was hired to lead the college beginning in 1986 and continued until 2002, when Walton was chosen to lead.

The success of that trio is told in the growth of the physical campus, the breadth of its programs, and the thousands of students who have attended the college and achieved their dream of a college education.

The Class Act is sponsored by Centralia Rotary and the Centralia College Foundation.
Returning vet finds success, new outlook

Fresh out of Rochester High School in 1989, Patrick Zandecki knew a career in the military was the route he would follow. He did enroll at Centralia College, took a few classes, got scared and left.

“I had zero confidence,” Zandecki said. “I was convinced that I was not going to be able to go to college.”

That attitude confirmed his next move, a career in the army. Zandecki spent 13 years in a mix of active duty and National Guard service that found him as a front-line soldier in Operation Desert Storm and later in Iraqi Freedom. He also served as a member of the National Guard pulling security duty in Salt Lake City during the 2002 Winter Olympics and later in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.

Along the way he married, and witnessed the birth of two of his children and the adoption of a third.

Then a different reality moved in.

In 1999, his wife was diagnosed with cancer. She died in 2007 leaving him to raise the kids. To further complicate things the army wanted to station him overseas, which could create problems with his parenting responsibilities. He shopped around for a military occupation that would fit him but nothing appealed. In 2008 he was granted a hardship discharge.

He turned to alcohol to deal with the pain in his life. He was, however, sober enough to realize that education could make a difference. He returned to Centralia College, shaken and still lacking confidence. But he needed to start his education campaign to restart his life.

“This is where the people at Centralia College made the difference,” Zandecki said. “I came here with problems and wasn’t sure where I would be going. The teachers and staff kept me on task. They wouldn’t let me quit. They pulled me up time and time again. I can never say enough about how everyone at this college helped me.”

More than course content, Zandecki said, “Instructors like Randy Johnson (associate professor of English), taught me to overcome the roadblocks I put up. I didn’t think I could do English and he encouraged me, worked with me, and showed me that I could. Pat Pringle (associate professor of earth sciences) stood by me in ways I can’t describe. That was important.”

Zandecki also credits other instructors with providing counseling, tutoring, and caring attitudes that “are getting me through,” he said. “They looked past my problems and my feelings in a way that I couldn’t. Each one is an amazing person.”

With support from the college faculty and staff, he has marched from a life as a hard drinking soldier and a person who could barely make two words come together in a written sentence, to an individual who has not tasted alcohol in over two years and can stand in front of hundreds of people to deliver a presentation.

Then Larry McGee, executive director of the bachelor degree program, grabbed him and wouldn’t let go.

“He told me I couldn’t quit, that I needed to keep going. He showed me what I needed to do to get into the bachelor’s program,” said Zandecki. “He taught me to believe in myself.” And Zandecki paid attention.

While members of the college faculty kept Zandecki engaged and on track, it was still his work that made success possible. This June he will be in the first Centralia College Bachelor of Applied Science in Management graduating class.

And there’s another successful outcome to his time at Centralia College: he received coaching on how to apply for a job. It paid off and now Zandecki is the Veterans Benefit Specialist for Lewis County.

“I have landed a job caring for my fellow veterans,” he said. “I can do something important to help others.”

He credits everyone at Centralia College for his achievement. “They (faculty, staff and students) are more than mentors to me, they are friends, family, teachers, and fellow students. They are the driving force that gave me the skills, and confidence I have today,” Zandecki said. “I have gained my confidence to the point where I will be able to stand with the most elite of students at Centralia College.”

Elk hunt raffle to support Sherwood Memorial scholarship

Ticket sales for the Dave Sherwood Memorial Scholarship Elk Hunt raffle will begin on March 1 at selected outlets across Lewis, Thurston, and Cowlitz counties. Ticket sales will be limited to 500.

For $25 a ticket, you will be entered into the raffle. The winner will be allowed to hunt for a big bull elk (minimum three-point) on TransAlta Centralia Mine lands. The hunt will take place during the modern rifle general hunting season in November.

The drawing will take place on Aug. 4 at the Hanke House on the Centralia College campus. All proceeds will go toward a scholarship in Sherwood’s name at the college that is administered by the Centralia College Foundation.

The winner is responsible for buying a Washington state hunting license and tag, and will be accompanied by a TransAlta representative during the hunt.

Tickets can be purchased by cash or check through either Sandy Yanish (sandy_yanish@transalta.com) or at TransAlta’s main office in Centralia. To buy a ticket using a debit or credit card, you need to go to the Hanke House at Centralia College, located at 401 Centralia College Blvd., or call 360.736.9391, ext. 290, or email foundation@centralia.edu.
Centralia College to send pair to All-Washington Academic Team state recognition ceremony

Kristina Lawley and Raegan Nelson, both second-year Centralia College students, were named to the 2014 Coca-Cola All-Washington Community College Academic Team and are nominated to the All-USA Today academic team.

Students were selected based on their academic achievement, community involvement, and service to the college. They are invited to take part in the All-Washington team awards ceremony scheduled to take place on March 27 at South Puget Sound Community College. Governor Jay Inslee has been invited to speak at the event and make awards to each of the team members.

“These students are examples of what individuals can do when they have purpose. They each hold great promise not only for their lives but also for society in general. We are proud of what they have done and what they will do,” Dr. Jim Walton, college president, said.

Centralia College excited for second Blazer Bot Robotics competition

The Centralia College Electronics, Robotics, and Automation (ERA) program, in partnership with middle schools throughout Lewis and Thurston counties, will hold its second Blazer Bot Lego robotics competition on Saturday, April 19, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

The competition takes place in the college Health and Wellness Center, in the Michael Smith Gymnasium, and is free and open to the public.

Using a Lego robotic kit, teams must follow strict criteria for each category of competition: sumo bot, follow-the-line, and a sound activated drag race.

Last year, there were six teams involving about 100 middle school students. This year the college expects to host 20 teams with about 300 students.

“It was such a huge success that with the help of robotics instructors at middle schools we decided to make it an annual event,” David Peterson, ERA instructor and event coordinator, said. “The foundation is instrumental with helping us to reach even more kids to get them excited about science and a robotics competition is a fun way to do it.”

The foundation is assisting with promotional materials for schools to encourage participation and has purchased three Lego robotics kits through the William Batie Endowment. The kits will be used on a “check-out” basis for those teams that can’t afford to purchase one, foundation director of Donor and Alumni Relations Julie Johnson, said.

Loaner kits are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Students in the ERA program will be available to assist student teams who need help with their projects.

“We are very excited to have an event on campus that challenges middle school students in the sciences. We want every participating team to have a chance,” Johnson said. “Plus, they’ll get a chance to see our beautiful campus and interact with our dedicated instructors.”

For more information contact Peterson at dpeterson@centralia.edu or visit https://centralia.instructure.com/courses/940814

For more information on becoming a sponsor for this event contact Julie Johnson at the Centralia College Foundation office at 360.736-9391, ext. 290.

Kristina, who lost an infant daughter after five days of life, recognizes the need for caring nurses in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and is committed to becoming an NICU nurse. She works as a primary care provider at an Olympia care center. A former U.S. Army soldier, she is a wife and mother and still finds time to be active in Phi Theta Kappa. She also served as a writing center tutor.

Raegan, a Running Start student, served as a biology lab assistant to work during the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) summer camp, the only Running Start student ever selected for this honor. She is the point guard and a captain on her high school basketball team and runs track in spring. She organized and leads a college chemistry study group, and serves as the group’s mentor. She wants to study nanotechnology and its role in curing cancer.
Diesel program grows with Cat donation

The Centralia College Diesel Technology program became $10,000 stronger thanks to a recent donation from N.C. Machinery, part of a matching donation the college receives from Caterpillar, Inc.

The generous donation will be used for scholarships and for diesel program equipment and materials and program support.

The success of the college depends on the support it receives from private industry and the community, Steve Ward, the college’s vice president for Finance and Administration, said. Ward is also the executive director of the foundation.

“N.C. Machinery and Caterpillar have been incredible partners for the college,” Ward said. “Their ongoing support of the diesel program and our students is admirable.”

The two companies have made matching donations the past six years, totaling $125,000. N.C. Machinery also holds positions on the college’s diesel technology advisory committee.

“We are happy to support Centralia College and the diesel program,” said N.C. Machinery general service manager John Kurtz. “We are especially excited for the (proposed) launch of the upcoming bachelor in diesel technology program.”

“Our company can only benefit from hiring students out of the four-year diesel program,” Kurtz said. “The advanced diesel training they’ll receive, coupled with an education in leadership and management, will make it easier to consider them for management positions within our company.”

“These donations are critical to support our programs and for student scholarships,” Ward said. “They make it possible for the college to offer advancements in programs, but more importantly they make it possible for some students to attend college who otherwise wouldn’t be able to attend.”

Centralia College’s second bachelor’s degree approved

Centralia College’s Bachelor of Applied Science in Diesel Technology (BASD), the college’s second bachelor’s program, was given a major stamp of approval by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical College at its meeting Feb. 6 in Olympia. The endorsement by the state board was an important step in the process toward rolling out the college’s second bachelor’s degree program beginning fall quarter 2014.

The state board approves bachelor’s degrees offered by two-year colleges, sets high standards for program quality, and outlines specific steps to follow before approval is granted. The board gave its unanimous approval after thorough review.

The college will now work to secure approval from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), the regional accreditation organization.

Larry McGee, associate dean of the colleges’ baccalaureate programs, said that the state board’s approval is vital.

“The state board has the specific responsibility of approving any new program and while we have other important hurdles that will be addressed, this approval is huge,” he said. “This is a rigorous degree program that is one of only four in the entire United States and the only one on the West Coast. This gives us the green light to proceed with the approval process,” McGee added.

The college is on track to begin the BASD degree program in September and inquiries about the program are currently being accepted.

“We appreciate very much the support from our community and the great effort on this by so many people,” Jim Walton, president of Centralia College, said. “We also very much appreciate the work of the state board and the committee that worked with us to move this program along.”

The BASD is designed for those who have earned a two-year degree in diesel technology, but lack training in some more advanced areas of diesel technology or the broader management-related education needed to move into leadership positions.

For information on the Bachelor of Applied Science in Diesel Technology or the Bachelor of Applied Science in Management, visit the college’s website: http://bachelors.centralia.edu/, or contact McGee at lmggee@centralia.edu.

McMenamins to host foundation night

Mark Tuesday, March 18, on your calendar for an evening of great entertainment coupled with the opportunity to support the Centralia College Foundation scholarship fund. McMenamins Olympic Club in downtown Centralia is supporting the foundation by turning over half of the proceeds from the evening’s festivities to support deserving students. The public is invited to share in the festivities.

McMenamins, located at 112 N. Tower Blvd. in Centralia, will entertain foundation supporters and all members of the general public from 5 p.m. to closing with games, camaraderie, and a movie as part of the donation package.

The full array of food and beverages will be available. The pub will also be showing movies and titles will be announced prior to the event. People are welcome to spend the night in one of the McMenamins historic hotel rooms.

Gift certificates and retail sales are not part of the donation by McMenamins.
Centralia College Foundation
600 Centralia College Blvd
Centralia, WA 98531

Using a Smartphone, scan the barcode to visit the Centralia College Foundation website and see all the features we’ve got listed.

College board of trustees continues search for next president

The process to attract and hire the next president of Centralia College continues, according to Julie Ledford, vice president of Human Resources and Legal Affairs. She, in concert with the Board of Trustees, is coordinating the search process with Dr. Donny Hunter, president and CEO of the North Carolina Association of Community College Trustees and President of National Search & Education Consulting.

The board is engaged in a nationwide search for the next college president and a board-appointed committee has begun screening candidates for the position. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

It is anticipated that the next president will be named by early May and assume office on July 1, 2014. Dr. Jim Walton, who began with Centralia College in 2002, announced his retirement effective June 30, 2014.

It’s a murderously grand time and you’re invited to help solve the Rose Room Murder Mystery

The Rose Room Murder Mystery promises to be an evening of fun and intrigue on Friday, March 7, from 6-10 p.m., at the Historic Washington Hotel in Chehalis. You will be a part of the thinking-person’s mystery.

The Rose Room Murder Mystery takes place in a real speakeasy, where guests, or should we say suspects, will enjoy a dinner catered by Mackinaws, period cocktails (or contemporary beer and wine) from a no host bar, plus a drama that includes a murder, and an opportunity for you to guess “who done it.” You will have a chance to win a spectacular grand prize.

Guests who attend wearing a period outfit will also have a chance to win “Best Outfit” honors, which carries an award of two tickets to the upcoming Wine and Cheese event this spring.

The murder mystery event is co-sponsored by Twin Cities Rotary Club and The Timberland Bank, with proceeds supporting Centralia College student scholarships through the Centralia College Foundation.

Tickets are $50 and are available at Book ‘n Brush in Chehalis and at Heymann Whinery in Centralia.

For more information on this event or on how the foundation helps support deserving students, call the foundation at 360.736.9391, ext. 290.