Tell us a little about your background.

My father was a Marine fighter pilot from Texas and my mother a school teacher from Colorado. We moved a lot when I was a kid, from Texas to California, North Carolina, elementary school in Connecticut, junior high in Ohio, and then finished high school in Kansas. My older sister teaches at University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill and my (six-foot-tall) little brother is a vice president for an agri-business company in Chicago.

As you can imagine, my dad was pretty strict, but my mom was full of second chances, so somehow we thrived through the moves and adventures, learned a lot of new accents, and I think we all have an appreciation and even patriotism for the diversity and greatness of our country. I was a late bloomer academically. I barely got to college and then took five years to finish, mostly due to working part-time jobs and not really understanding what I was supposed to be doing or learning!

As a younger kid, I liked the woods, exploring, and building. So, in my idealized childhood memory, I am in the woods, building a treehouse, and there is no authority figure telling me that if I decide to put the rope swing THERE, I will inevitably crash into THAT tree on the other side of the creek. I was not the greatest rope swing engineer but was lucky to make it through youth without serious injury.

In addition to walking uphill to school in the snow both ways, we started working pretty young in my family. I threw papers for a few years, bussed tables in a family restaurant, mowed roughs on a golf course, flipped burgers at McDonald’s (but I sure preferred cooking breakfasts) …let’s see…then went on to construction labor and then assembler/welder to make money for college. I was lucky enough to meet my future wife, LaDonna, in college, and she gave me a clearer sense of purpose as we were finishing up college.

(Continued inside)
On Sept. 18, the Centralia College Foundation, with the support of its generous donors, set another record year for scholarships to Centralia College students.

The annual Scholarship Night celebration saw the awarding of more than $740,000 in scholarships, grants, tuition waivers, and financial aid. Of the 328 total students who received an award, 291 are seeking a two-year degree or certificate and 37 are seeking a bachelor’s degree.

Corbet Theatre was at capacity (500 seats) with family and friends of scholarship recipients sharing in the momentous occasion. Guests heard from scholarship recipients about the impact scholarships had on their lives. Guests also heard from the Nupen family about the importance of supporting education at Centralia College through the creation of the Nupen Family Endowment for scholarships.

As the foundation looks to the coming year, the needs for students are only increasing. The foundation is responding by focusing even more on raising scholarship dollars for student success at Centralia College.

To learn how you can support the students at Centralia College, please contact the foundation office at 360-736-9391, ext. 290, or at foundation@centralia.edu.

The son of a civil engineer, Christopher Martin remembers going to work with his dad and enjoying the precision of engineering.

“I’ve always wanted to be an engineer,” he said. “I love problem-solving and I really want things to be exact. I also love the math and science involved.”

Christopher is a 2014 recipient of the National Science Foundation’s Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Scholarship. He was the 2014 valedictorian of Centralia High School and is working towards his transfer degree at Centralia College.

Having a scholarship helps him save money for his bachelor’s and master’s degrees, and motivates him to keep working hard.

“Receiving a scholarship takes a tremendous load off my shoulders,” Christopher said. “I can now spend less time worrying about how I’m going to pay for college and more time actually focusing on my studies.”
Erika Brower knows the secret to her success is hard work.

She graduated from Centralia High School in 2013 with a 3.80 GPA and has excelled in athletics and 4-H.

“I may not be the smartest person in the world, but I know I work harder than anyone else in my class to make sure I succeed,” she said.

Erika was chosen for the Altrusa Club of Centralia-Chehalis and Ercel Davis endowed scholarships. She plans to use the funds to finish her associate degree at Centralia College.

Though she’s not sure what career path she will take, she knows education is the perfect place to start.

“Without your help, attending and paying for myself to go to Centralia College would be so difficult,” she said. “The scholarships mean so much to me.”

Scholarship Spotlight

A Conversation with Dr. Robert Frost (continued from front)

What drew you to Centralia College?

I applied to Centralia College for what I saw as an ideal mix of very successful college history in one of the oldest two-year colleges in the country, rural spaces, a deep-seated loyalty and support system between the college and the community, and then just the integrity, commitment, and professionalism I saw within the college itself.

People here take care of each other, and for me, that is the most important value we can have as a learning community: the ability to feel safe when we take risks, share a creative thought, or make tough decisions together. I felt that support as I went through the interview process.

Finally, I saw the Centralia-Chehalis area as a very welcoming place for my family and see the Washington higher education system as having many opportunities for my daughters, as well.

What experience do you bring to Centralia College?

Having worked in community colleges since 1989, other than a two-year stint as a community college leadership professor at Oregon State University, I am very committed to this model and the students we support.

In addition to work experience, my research and scholarship is based on rural colleges and communities, but also on the challenges small communities face in a rapidly globalizing and interconnected society. Even though small communities have greater challenges in addressing technological and economic challenges, we also have closely-knit relationships and values that provide great advantages, especially in a family and sustainability context.

Overall, I worked in community colleges that have worked through colossal challenges, so I hope my previous experience will help the college and community thrive and grow for years to come.

Dr. Robert Frost with his wife, LaDona

Dr. Frost with his wife, LaDona

Dr. Robert Frost contemplating a skull during STEM Academy 2014.
What is your focus this year at Centralia College?

This year, I really want to get to know the students and employees within the college, the community leaders, and learn from them what is the shared vision for our future. Already I hear support for and ideas about how to grow our enrollments, develop a more diverse and “residential” college, and how we can better partner with the various groups like the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Council, Port Authority, Workforce Development Council, but also with our partners in public schools. Staff members at the college are in conversations with school leaders across the college service area on how we can strengthen our partnerships to increase college attendance, and college success. My first year begins with students’ needs, getting to know what people think, and then helping to chart the course that is our future.

Where do you see Centralia College in 10 years?

In many ways, the college will be similar to what we are today: a great and thriving college. In 10 years, we will have more students who have moved here to go to college. We will have more programs with a “statewide” reputation that serve to attract students to learn, and stay, in our area. There will be tighter connections between college studies and applied internships. All this will help the college and community grow in sync with one another. Perhaps more important for me is the intersection of college and community in 10 years. I see Centralia College continuing to be a very close partner in planning, and supporting, our communities’ future.

What do you enjoy in your free time?

As a family, we like to explore new places, beaches, natural wonders. When I can talk them into it, I like visiting art, history, and most any other museum with my family (but often I do this on my own when traveling!). There is always tinkering, painting, yard work, and all the other chores associated with a house that never seem done, but I enjoy the ability to lose myself in chores at home at least for a few hours each week.

A few years back, we did a lot of bicycling, touring with other families, and that is something I greatly enjoyed, too. LaDona is a great musician (trumpet, piano, Andean and African instruments) and I am a bit of a drummer and guitar player, but have found little time in recent years except for those 15-30 minute "timeouts" that we all find rare, yet highly therapeutic!

I guess what I do most in my downtime is the exploratory learning that I never had time for when I was in school. Whether it is PBS, or Googling a person or place I have heard about, there always seems to be a question I want to answer when I have that extra time to search for it.
For Anna DeTray, receiving a scholarship for her education is an inspiring gift she hopes to someday return. “Always, I am astonished by the generosity of the people in our community,” she said. “Someday, I would like to give back to the young people of this area by perhaps doing the same thing – giving a student an opportunity to attend college.”

Anna graduated from W.F. West High School in Chehalis in 2014. She considers herself a hard worker and credits her parents for her academic success. “The work ethic they instigated in my siblings and I drove me to try to be my best, not the best in someone else’s eyes,” she explained.

Anna received the Hoa Van Vu Endowed Scholarship. She plans to earn her associate degree at Centralia College before transferring to Washington State University to study health sciences.
Using your Smartphone to visit the Centralia College Foundation website and see all the features we’ve got listed.

Scholarship Spotlights INSIDE!

The Legacy Society – A Legacy of Giving

What if you could make a lasting and permanent gift, one that was bigger than you ever dreamed possible? And, what if you could do it in a way that honored and protected your loved ones’ inheritance at the same time?

Centralia College Foundation’s Legacy Society may be the perfect option for you. The Legacy Society allows the foundation to thank a very special group of people: those who have included the foundation in their future giving and estate plans.

As a Legacy Society member, you are honored on a special plaque that hangs in a prominent place on the Centralia College campus. Additionally, you receive a beautifully framed certificate, and are invited as a special guest to special foundation events.

Becoming a member of the Legacy Society is simple. Visit online at foundation.centralia.edu/trusts or call the foundation office at 360-736-9391, ext., 290, for details.

Good things come to those who give