Founders' Day event celebrates RCC 40th anniversary

Rogue Community College will mark its 40th year of operation April 29 by recognizing those who made the dream of a “people’s college” come true.

The RCC Founders’ Day event is set for 3-5 p.m. in the Student Center/Cafeteria on the Redwood Campus.

Community members, along with current and former faculty and staff, students and board members, are invited. Light refreshments will be served.

Educators and civic leaders talked about a two-year college in southern Oregon for at least a decade before it became a reality, but three people were primarily responsibility for the dream coming true: Marjorie Holzgang, Bill Ford, and Phil Nelson.

It was Holzgang who said: “Rogue Community College is truly a people’s college — it was the people who worked for it, believed in it, and made it happen.” Holzgang died in 1997 and Ford in 2006. Nelson, a retired attorney, now lives in Portland.

Midge Renton, who served on the first RCC Board of Education, also was an active supporter in the early days and continues her involvement, serving on the RCC Advisory Committee and the RCC Foundation Board. Both Nelson and Renton are expected to attend the Founders’ Day event.

The first election to establish a two-county college in southern Oregon was held February 1970. The measure passed in Josephine County but failed in Jackson County. Josephine County voters created the RCC District nine months later in November 1970.

But it was not until 1971 that RCC hired 13 full-time instructors and three administrators and began teaching classes in the former Fort Vannoy Jobs Corps Center. More than 1,000 students enrolled fall term 1971, the equivalent of about 410 FTE. Tuition was $8 per credit.

Jackson County voters elected to join the RCC District in 1996.

Since its founding, RCC has had five presidents: Henry Pete, Howard Sims, Harvey Bennett, Rick Levine, and Dr. Peter Angstadt, the current president.

April 29, which is National Arbor Day, also will mark the initiation of a new Redwood Campus Arboretum self-guided walking tour. Those attending the Founders’ Day event will be invited on a guided tour of the arboretum.

For more information, contact Denise Nelson, assistant to the RCC President and Board of Education, at 541-956-7001

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