Rogue Scholar recipient closer to realizing goal

Making the switch from a long career in broadcasting to the pursuit of a degree in ocean science may seem like an unusual transition, but for Kirk Theodoroff, the transition was natural.

And to help him realize his goal, the Rogue Community College Foundation recently presented him with the Rogue Scholar Award, which goes to the highest scoring applicant.

While working in broadcasting, Theodoroff became increasingly conscious of current world issues and wanted to increase his ability to advocate for change. An avid outdoor enthusiast, Kirk’s love of exploring the beach and learning about ocean life inspired a special interest in one particular issue: oceanic dead zones.

Oceanic dead zones are large areas of water that are unable to absorb oxygen; some areas are as large as a small county. Within those regions, conditions are unable to support sea life. The problem began off the Oregon Coast at least a decade ago and is spreading to different parts of the planet, according to Theodoroff, who is interested in understanding the factors contributing to these dead zones, some of natural origin and some human related.

“If we lose our oceans, we lose everything,” he said. Three years ago, Theodoroff left the broadcasting world to attend RCC and begin his education in science with the end goal of working for a research agency such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Newport, Ore. After completing his coursework at Rogue, Kirk will take another step this fall toward his goal when he begins a dual enrollment program at RCC and Oregon State University to pursue of a Bachelor of Science degree in marine biology.

“I’m inspired by the many returning older students at RCC,” Theodoroff said. “I always try to pat people on the back who are taking on the challenge because lots of older students are fearful of returning to school. “You have to give yourself a shot,” he added.

Theodoroff received three scholarships through the RCC Foundation for the upcoming academic year, which provides significant support for him to continue his pursuit. He was “surprised and honored” by the announcement, which will help him “keep moving forward toward the goal of leaving a positive imprint on the planet.”

The RCC Foundation supports the college through scholarships and direct project support in Josephine and Jackson counties. The private, non-profit foundation accepts tax-deductible gifts and bequests, and currently manages a substantial endowment. For more information, contact the RCC Foundation office at 541-956-7327.