Two RCC students honored for academic success, community service

Rogue Community College students Dylan Orton and Eric Grace have been named to the 2013 Oregon Community College Association’s (OCCA) All Oregon Academic team.

Based on their academic excellence and community service, the two honor students were selected by Vice President of Instruction Kirk Gibson from a field of students nominated by RCC instructors.

The OCCA, in partnership with Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) International Honor Society, sponsors the award.

Each student scholar will receive a $1,000 scholarship to an Oregon public university and attend a reception in Salem this spring with Gov. John Kitzhaber and their counterparts from the state’s other 16 community colleges. The outstanding students also are eligible to compete on the national level for All American Academic Team scholarships.

Orton, 29, is majoring in business technology and computer security. Due to family circumstances, she was able to attend elementary, middle and high school only sporadically and without success. As a teenager, Orton eventually became homeless.

She began studying at RCC for the GED and passed the exams in 2009. That fall she enrolled in credit classes and earned an A+ in Human Relations in Organizations.

“I’ve been surprised about how well suited I was for higher learning,” she noted. “I realized that with time and effort I would succeed. “For me college is my chance to succeed academically and professionally,” explained Orton, who serves as president of the RCC Chapter of PTK and is a student worker with the RCC Foundation. She also volunteers for several local organizations, including Habitat for Humanity. Orton and her husband are raising their 3-year old son, Charles. Her goals include helping teen parents continue their education, either professionally or as a volunteer.

Eric Grace began taking classes at RCC in 2011, working toward becoming a licensed counselor. He has since transferred to Southern Oregon University, where he is a double major in psychology and music.
Originally from Minnesota, he studied at University of Wisconsin, River Falls, traveled and worked at a range of jobs.

“I re-entered academia for the joy of learning and to build more confidence in my abilities to work with others in a supportive and healing capacity,” he said. “I started taking one class at a time, and I was just really surprised how much I enjoyed RCC – and I was really impressed with the instructors. RCC makes it so easy to get the support to do what you need and want to do.”

A single parent of son, Savar, 8, Grace owns GraceWorks Housecleaning Services. Grace is a volunteer youth mentor and a moderator for the online Rogue Valley Action Network.

“I plan to see after I graduate what I want to do next: pursue mentoring, spiritual life coaching, or go on to get my master’s for counseling,” he said.

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Twitter cue: Dylan Orton and Eric Grace named 2013 RCC outstanding student scholars

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