



Plugged **in**

FACULTY & STAFF NEWSLETTER



CONCERT HALL

AC PRESIDENT SHARES DIARY
OF WHITE HOUSE EXCURSION

IT DEPARTMENT NUMBERED
AMONG INDUSTRY LEADERS

PHOTOS: MOLLER RETIREMENT
RECEPTION DRAWS A CROWD

NEW VP FEELS RIGHT AT HOME
IN AMARILLO – *and rightly so!*

WINTER 2015

VOLUME VII



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

MY WHITE HOUSE DIARY

By Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart
Amarillo College President

November 2014

When Amarillo College was invited to submit an application for the White House College Opportunity Summit, I was surprised and excited. Our initial submission led to several more and with each step in the process, I deepened my understanding of the importance of the event. When we received our invitation as a participant, I was honored that our work on student success was being acknowledged.

Dec. 3, 2014

I boarded the airplane to Washington, D.C. with no expectations and little understanding of what would transpire during the event. Our AC group included AISD Superintendent Rod Schroder and Amarillo Area Foundation CEO Clay Stribling. It was exciting to be a part of Rod's first visit to our nation's capital. Before dinner, we toured the Smithsonian Air and Space museum. Our country has been built on ambitious dreams. I hoped the White House Summit would challenge us to dream bigger. We received the event agenda at 10 p.m. I initially thought this was absurd – I couldn't imagine how unorganized an event must be if the participants didn't know what would be happening until the night before. We then learned that the late agenda was a part of a White House security protocol. When the President, First Lady, and Vice-President of the United States are involved, the longer their travel details are public, the greater their risk. Receiving the agenda in my email at 10 p.m. was just fine, overwhelming, in fact, because AC was entering a national stage, and this boy from Slaton, Texas was in a bit over his head.

Dec. 4, 2014

The security was intense. We went through several metal detectors, security stops, and searches. We were escorted into a theater with about 200 of our closest friends. At one point, we were talking with the governor of Tennessee, the chancellor of University of Arizona, and Valerie Jarrett, close advisor to the president – all everyone was talking about was the importance of community colleges. It was incredible. All the ensuring presentations and conversations were completely affirming of our work here at AC.

After about two hours of presentations, the energy in the room changed; cameras and press flooded the room, and we realized

the President of the U.S. was about to enter. When President Obama walked in and started touting the virtues of community colleges and challenging us to get more students to complete degrees, it was truly a special feeling.

After lunch, we returned to the theater to the arrival of First Lady Michelle Obama. Whether you are a fan of hers or not, she was truly engaging. Her presentation was far less political and far more challenging. She focused her conversations on advising and its role in completion and highlighted the need for community colleges to do more and to develop aspirations of greatness for our institutions and our students. She was inspirational – across political lines from the conversations around my seat.

The day ended with what was to be a five-minute address from Vice-President Joe Biden. He concluded the event; yet, he spoke for 55 minutes and told one story after another. Most of his stories were about the power of community colleges. As he walked off the stage, we talked about the excitement of our shared White House experience. We talked about the White House Tree Lighting ceremony we were attending with Tom Hanks. Mostly, we talked about what we learned. A few important ideas and themes were repeated throughout the day. I want to share with you what challenged me personally and professionally.

Dec. 5, 2014

As I boarded a plane home, I started reviewing my notes and reflecting what I wanted to bring back to our AC family. These are statements made by our leaders that caused me to stop and think about our mission in a new way:

- *"We produce exactly what our system is designed to produce. We can't improve completion doing things the way we have always done. We have to think about the system much more broadly. It's not just public education and higher education - It's more comprehensive. We must have a systems approach that puts learners as the central function of everything we do, from the business office to advising office to the faculty office."*

We need to own our product and improve our systems to improve our product – and it is clear that EVERY employee in EVERY division must embrace the educational mission as the foundation for each job.



- *“A student sitting in a room with a single faculty is no longer the model. It is a foundation, but now education is beyond that. We have to redesign our systems beyond the classroom as a COMPREHENSIVE learning experience for each student.”*

This is a profound and challenging statement because every employee has a role in educating each student with this philosophy. The classroom is only one place for education at AC.

- *“Technology must be a core tenant of every student’s learning process. It has already happened. But who is leading the revolution on this? It must be faculty and yet, we outsource this innovation to third parties.”*

We are embracing technology as instructors and employees. The college is moving forward. Yet, the conversation about technology challenges us to be the innovators, leading its integration with our mission. We can do more.

- *“The president’s completion goal is a math problem - getting more students through the pipeline. More importantly, the completion goal is a moral problem - we can’t maintain the greatness of America if education, equity, and access aren’t what is driving our work.”*

We at AC must look at our work as a MORAL imperative – because it is one. We don’t often think of our work – be it leading a classroom, advising a student, balancing a budget, or cleaning an office – as a MORAL calling. How could we as a college and you, as an AC employee, better fulfill your moral obligation? It was a profound question to ask, and even more important to answer.

AC will continue to garner national attention. If we are going to transform our community, we must embrace our moral imperative, evaluate our systems, integrate technology, and understand the role every employee and every job plays in educating each student enrolled with AC. Our community needs us, and our country is waiting for us to answer the call to action. We can do it.

ALL-COLLEGE BUDGET MEETING SLATED FEB. 20 @ ORDWAY HALL

- WHO:** All AC Employees
WHAT: All-College Budget Meeting
WHEN: From 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, Feb. 20
WHERE: Ordway Hall Auditorium, Washington Street
WHY: To clarify ongoing discussions and expectations of the current budgetary process at AC.



Phillips' Donation



Phillips 66, a longtime supporter of Amarillo College, on Dec. 15 presented Lyndy Forrester, dean of technical education, with a check for \$12,500, a monetary contribution that will be used to enhance the tool-scholarship fund.

Students enrolled in technical education programs on AC’s East Campus are largely responsible for providing their own tools, an expense that continues to rise. That’s why the College has established a scholarship through the AC Foundation solely intended for the acquisition of tools.

Jenifer Campbell, senior advisor of university relations and recruiting for Phillips 66, presented the check and reiterated her corporation’s commitment to offer internship opportunities and potential employment to AC students and graduates in the foreseeable future.

Forrester thankfully acknowledged the gift and said corporate partners such as Phillips 66 can and do make a meaningful difference in the lives of students and their families.

“The support of Phillips 66 and other corporate partners that help sustain technical education at Amarillo College are vital to the continued success of our programs,” Forrester said.



Dr. Deborah Vess Has Come Full Circle

New Vice President Returns to Her Amarillo Roots

Dr. Deborah Vess has settled into a house just around the corner from where her grandparents once lived.

"It's pretty neat how that worked out," said AC's new vice president of academic affairs, who also in January took up residence on the second floor of Lynn Library.

Now that the dust of moving has settled, Dr. Vess very likely feels somewhat more at home than the average Amarillo newcomer; this not only is the place of her birth, but it's home still to several who share her family tree. While she had long sought a return to her Lone Star roots—largely she was raised in the Metroplex—it was like hitting a jackpot when the opportunity that finally arose just happened to be on her most-native soil of all.

"This is such a great community," she said. "My mom was born here and so were my grandparents. I had been trying to return to Texas for some time, but the forces of fate sent me elsewhere."

They first sent her on an educational sojourn to Indiana, Pitt, Penn State and North Texas, equipping her with an uncommon disciplinary medley that features a bachelor's degree in piano performance, a master's in philosophy,



and a doctoral degree in European history.

Professionally the forces of fate then swept her from Georgia College & State University to the College of Staten Island, N.Y. (as associate provost), to, most recently, Rivier University in Nashua, N.H., where she served as vice president for academic affairs.

AC is now the beneficiary of Dr. Vess' vast experience and abundant know-how, all of which will come in handy as she endeavors not to reinvent the wheel, but to equip AC with the wheels most optimal for propulsion of our ongoing initiatives to new levels of success.

"We will continue to work on the very important student-success initiatives the College has ongoing," Dr. Vess said. "We are very fortunate to have a

highly dedicated faculty and terrific tutors doing great work as we grapple with issues that are the same everywhere: the preparedness level of students and their ultimate success."

The vice president said she will strive to deepen AC's approach to the No Excuses philosophy, in part by embedding high-impact practices in a curriculum that soon will be enhanced by additional global and undergraduate research opportunities. Encouraging students to participate in learning communities could enhance the First-Year Seminar, fuel common learning and promote the desirable process of socialization so likely to ensue, she said.

Dr. Vess is excited about AC's robust Technical Education and Continuing Education programs, not to mention the leadership style of President Russell Lowery-Hart, who she describes as "highly approachable." And as a musician herself, she is highly enthusiastic about AC's "impressive" Music Department.

Having come full circle—pleased to be home again at last—Dr. Vess said she is delighted to be part of a College community boasting not just an exemplary vision, but great visuals as well.

"I've been walking the campuses and we have beautiful facilities," the well-traveled academician said. "We should all be proud."



Regents Pave the Way for Next Renovation

The Board of Regents has given its blessing for the College to proceed with plans for an expansive \$3.7 million renovation project on the Washington Street Campus. The project will transform the first floor of Lynn Library into a Student Commons (with a refurbished Career Center), thoroughly update the second floor of the CUB, and completely refashion the pedestrian walkway between those two buildings. Actual construction should

begin in late summer. The project will be funded primarily through private contributions (a \$1 million gift has been received from a donor who, for the time being, wishes anonymity), and with about \$750,000 in remaining bond money. To ensure timely headway while additional benefactors are sought, Regents authorized the use of AC reserves, which will be replenished by the acquisition of subsequent gifts.

STORYBOOK ENDING



Jerry Moller Bids College Farewell



Colleagues, friends and family trekked to the CUB Jan. 29 to pay tribute to Jerry Moller, whose retirement closes the book on a storied quarter-century of

service to AC—as instructor, division chair, dean, and periodic vice president.

Moller, who in 2011 was named Administrator of the Year by the National Council of Instructional Administrators, twice served as AC's interim vice president of academic affairs.

Widely hailed for his incomparable ability to spin a good yarn, Moller, for his part, stepped up to the podium and easily lured partygoers from food lines with punchlines—and emotion enough to elicit the granting of infinite mulligans whenever the golf course beckons.





FACULTY AND STAFF ACCOLADES

Turkey In July

Bruce Moseley, chairman of the Business Department and coordinator of the Legal Studies Program, has been invited to join a pair of research teams consisting of law students and faculty from Nepal and India focused on how legal aid clinics can help combat domestic violence there. Consequently, Moseley's research has been accepted for presentation July 22-28 at the 8th Worldwide Global Alliance for Justice Education's International Conference in Eskisehir, Turkey. Moseley, along with collaborator David Tushaus, professor of legal studies at Missouri Western State University, will present "Conducting a Community Needs Assessment for Domestic Violence Victims in India and Nepal: Implications for Clinics, Clients and the Community." The two research teams intend to publish their results in the *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education*.

Tenure Granted

Upon the recommendation of the Rank and Tenure Committee, seven members of the faculty on Jan. 27 were approved for tenure — effective Sept. 1, 2015 — by the Board of Regents. They are:

- **Brent Cavanaugh**, instructor of photography
- **Debby Hall**, assistant professor, associate degree in nursing
- **Verena Johnson**, assistant professor, associate degree in nursing
- **Tiffany Lamb**, assistant professor of biology
- **Tamara Rhodes**, assistant professor, associate degree in nursing
- **Teresa Smoot**, assistant professor, associate degree in nursing
- **Amanda Wheeler**, assistant professor of mathematics

Employment Milestones

The following **Classified Employees** have qualified for length-of-service pins so far this year:

JANUARY

Abel Velasco, 20 years
Kathy Scott, 15
Tommy DeJesus, 15
Lonnie Jordan, 10
Leslie Priest, 10
Stefanie Carruth, 10
Harmonie Hefley, 5
Jeffrey Herman, 5
Mindy Weathersbee, 5
Lynn Zippilli, 5

FEBRUARY

Brenda Andrews, 25
Nan Kemp, 20
Tonja Hester, 15
Phyllis Oages, 15
Johnny Moore, 15
Clarence Mabbitt, 10

The following **Faculty** have qualified for length-of-service pins so far this year:

JANUARY

Aimee Martin, 25 years
Larry Adams, 15
Lisa Holdaway, 10
Reem Witherspoon, 5

The following **Administrators** have qualified for length-of-service pins so far this year:

JANUARY

Mark Hanna, 30 years
Renee Vincent, 15
Luke Morrison, 15
Leslie Shelton, 5

FEBRUARY

Tina Babb, 5
Sammie Artho, 5

CEC Book Scholarships

The **Classified Employee Council** selected its first recipients of the CEC Employee Book Scholarship. They are **Sarah Bruce**, **Bethany Krewson**, **Matthew Lopez** and **Zahhra Nourmohtad**. With help from the AC Foundation, funds left over from the AC Classified Employee Association, which disbanded in 2008, were used to create the new scholarship. A CEC subcommittee made the awards in December for Spring 2015. For information on how to apply for the CEC Book Scholarship or to make a donation, please contact any CEC member or the AC Foundation.

ADDY Awards

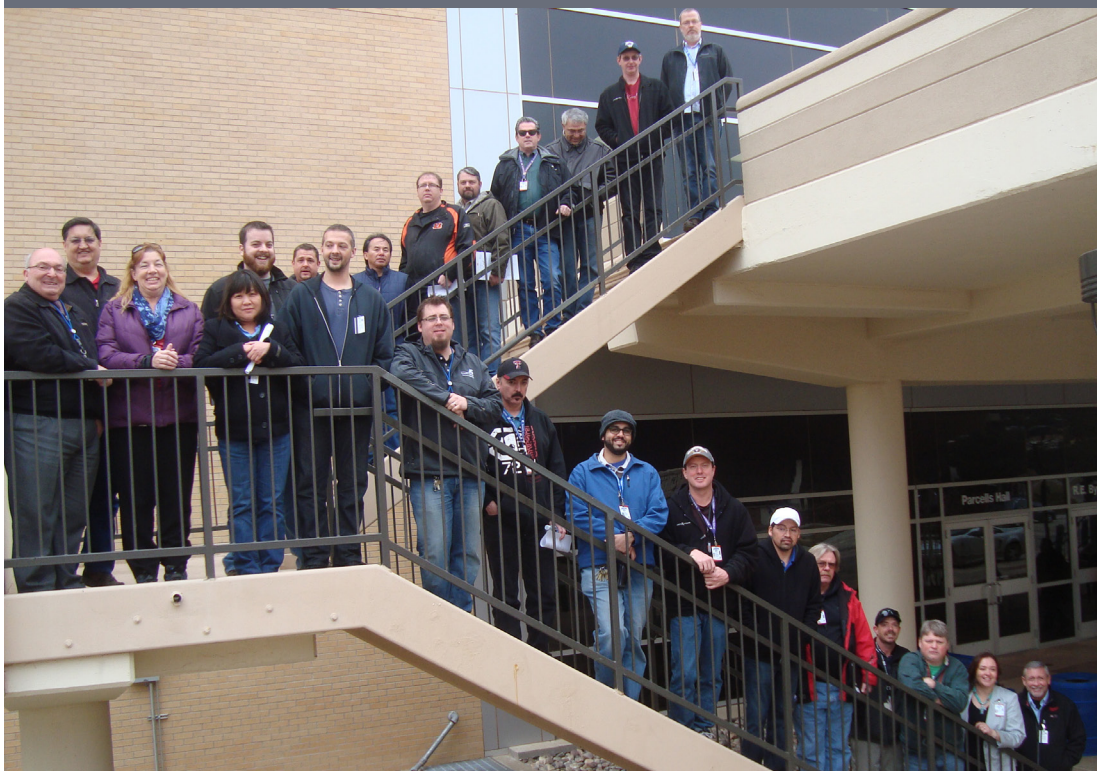


Derek Weathersbee, instructor of graphic design, captured three ADDY Awards — two Golds and a Silver — and **Stefanie Carruth**, graphic design specialist in College Relations, was credited with designing a brochure for Amarillo Opera that won a Gold ADDY during an awards event Saturday, Feb. 9 in Amarillo.

The ADDYs, which represent excellence in advertising, were presented on behalf of the American Advertising Federation. Weathersbee won Golds for Digital Advertising and Industry Self-Promotion. His Silver came in Elements of Advertising. Incidentally, AC students collected nine ADDYs in the student categories.



IT Department Lauded by Leading Research Firm



Lee Colaw, far left, and his IT team have been recognized by Info-Tech Research Group as one of the Top 10 IT Leaders of 2014.

Your technology has a hiccup, goes on the fritz, rejects your (probably expired) password, whatever, and so you call the Help Line and in relatively short order staff from the Information Technology Department have your problem solved.

Score another victory for IT, that's fine, but don't let the episode perpetuate any notions that IT now has nothing better to do than await your next call. This is a Department that never rests, that deals with the complex issues of critical infrastructure so often taken for granted, that does so with exceptional efficiency.

Says who? Says a leading IT research and advisory company: Info-Tech Research Group in January of 2015 named AC's IT Department to its list of Top 10 IT Leaders of 2014.

In notifying Chief Information Officer Lee M. Colaw of the accolade, Info-Tech revealed it had conducted an industry-wide survey of end users that netted 22,000 responses from among 250 business organizations. AC, it proclaimed, ranks third overall in the areas of innovation and user satisfaction.

"I'm really touched by this honor for our organization," Colaw said. "I have a great team of excellent employees who truly strive to achieve the best results, and it's gratifying that their outstanding work is being recognized by Info-Tech."

What Info-Tech's survey shows is an IT Department that demonstrated successful innovations on a number of fronts, most notably the fruitful integration in 2014 of its main computer system (Ellucian Colleague) with its learning management system (Blackboard).

The cutting-edge merger lets users access the portal, and everything to which it leads, through a single sign-on. This streamlining coincided with AC's challenging conversion of learning management systems—from Angel to Blackboard—and with the incorporation of a single and secure email system for students.

IT also revamped the enrollment system for Continuing Education in 2014, implementing a fully online service to include applications, enrollments and payments, where only a manual system had previously been in place. The application programming interface has served as both a welcome convenience for prospective students and an archetype for academic institutions across the U.S. and in Canada, Colaw said

Also in 2014, the IT Department found time to set up an institution-wide cost-per-copy printing system for students, established a computer center on the West Campus, and implemented a new adaptive design for the entire College website.

"This past year was the culmination of several years of implementation of our strategic plan," Colaw said. "I call it the 'Big Bang' year. We installed more than a hundred smart classrooms, we continued to expand our wireless capabilities, and we refined our emergency notification system.

"We didn't do these things to be noticed, but it's really kind of nice that someone has."



HSI STEM Projects Are Making a Difference

By Cara Crowley
President's Chief of Staff

Welcome to AC's Grants Gab. Today we are highlighting the accomplishments of our HSI (Hispanic-Serving Institutions) STEM project. In 2011, AC was awarded a five-year, \$4.3 million HSI STEM grant to increase student success in mathematics at all levels; increase the number of degrees awarded in STEM fields; and increase the number of students transferring to a four-year university in an engineering field.

Over the past four years, this grant has been instrumental in redesigning all levels of math and engineering courses. Each redesigned course has improved student success and engagement. Funds also supported two significant renovation projects. The first floor of Durrett Hall was renovated to make space for an expanded Math Outreach Center and Testing Center. The renovation was completed in February 2013.

In January 2015, AC opened the doors to the Engineering Center, which is located on the newly renovated first floor of the Engineering Building. Math and engineering

students are now able to utilize this revamped space to support increased engagement and student learning. AC's Engineering Center is based upon Purdue University's freshman and sophomore Engineering Center, which is a dynamic center including space for classes, hands-on labs and student innovation.

Please join me in thanking Dr. Kathy Wetzel, Collin Witherspoon, and our math and engineering faculty who have been integral to the success of the project, and Joe Crowley. Their dedication to this grant has been substantial. Because of their commitment, students in these courses and programs are successful. If you have not had a chance to see the AC Engineering Center, be sure to visit the Engineering Building and see how math and engineering faculty are engaging our students in innovative ways.

ABOVE: Dr. Kathy Wetzel, dean of STEM, and Collin Witherspoon, Math Department chair, admire the fresh surroundings of the Engineering Center.



The Holidaze



College Relations captured first place in AC's Holiday Door Decorating Contest with this Minion-Santa door designed by Stefanie Carruth. The winning prize: President Lowery-Hart took the CR crew out for breakfast at Youngblood's Cafe.



Community College Day in Austin



AC was well represented Feb. 3 in Austin for Community College Day at the Capitol. Administrators who accompanied members of Student Government were, from left, Bob Austin, Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, and Heather Atchley. Also making the trip was Don Nicholson, at right, chairman of the Board of Regents.



Attitude Adjustment Punctuates Scholars' India Adventure

By Bob Austin
Vice President of Student Affairs

When you're a tourist in India you spend most of your day with other tourists and you tend to miss out on a lot of the interesting cultural nuances. I mean, you can see everything with your eyes, but you almost never get an opportunity to ask the burning questions like, "Who is responsible for all those dogs?" or "How did you get four people on that motorcycle?" Those questions, and many others, were never addressed because we never really got much of a chance to talk to the locals.

On the last day of our visit, however, something special happened. We had approximately five hours to burn before beginning our journey from Jaipur back to the airport in Delhi. Our tour guide, Rakesh (his real name), asked if we would be interested in seeing a Bollywood film. Our entire group agreed that it was a brilliant idea. We had just spent the last several days visiting the antiquities of India; we were eager to experience the modern side of things. So, we loaded our tour bus and headed downtown to a local shopping mall.

Interestingly, shopping malls in India look a lot like shopping malls in the United States. The one that we visited was large, modern looking, and filled with stores that sold brand-name clothes and lots of other mall stuff. Most importantly, this mall had a multiplex cinema located on the third floor and we were going to see an exciting new Bollywood movie titled *Tevar*, which in English means "attitude."

As we would soon learn, there are certain elements that can be found in all Bollywood movies. There is a hero, a villain, a

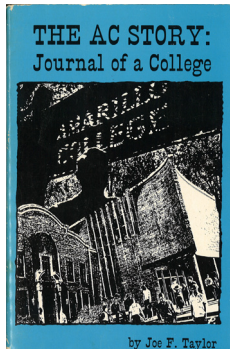


beautiful girl, romance, and most importantly, spectacular dance scenes. The dialog was in Hindi (the first language of approximately 300 million people), but it didn't matter because everyone in the world understands the language of romance and spectacular dance scenes. So, there we were on the opposite side of the earth sharing our experience with a theater full of Indians. A Bollywood movie called *Tevar* taught us a little bit about attitude and a lot about modern Indian culture. It was magical, and a great way to wrap up our time in India.

Editor's note: Bob Austin in January was among those who accompanied a group of AC Presidential Scholars on a two-week tour of India and Nepal.



Snippets from *The AC Story: Journal of a College*



The weather in these parts is fickle—flips from fair to foul in a flash, frequently. And you’ve gotta be gutsy to go out when it’s gusty; there’s really nothing all that firma about *our terra firma*.

This concludes Preaching to the Choir 101. Feel free to take it with a grain of salt, or sand, but please stay tuned for Preaching

to the Choir 102. For that we turn to eminent historian and AC professor emeritus, the late Joe Taylor, who passed away in 2009 at the age of 97.

Dr. Taylor in 1979 authored *The AC Story: Journal of a College*. The book details the history of AC’s birth in 1929—when the author himself became a member of the first student body—through its dynamic growth well into the 1970s. Lest you are unaware, he taught at AC from 1946-1978 and retired as chairman of the Social Sciences Department.

The following passage, lifted verbatim from Dr. Taylor’s book, describes a football game played here between the AC Badgers and the North Texas A&M (now UT—Arlington) Aggies.

According to the newspaper account of the game, the first quarter was played in a high wind, and the second quarter in a dead calm. Then, in the third quarter, a driving rain forced spectators back under the stadium roof. The fourth quarter was played in a light sandstorm. In the fourth quarter the Aggie coach pulled his team off the field and threatened to leave, but (AC Coach) Baggett persuaded him to stay and finish the game, which Amarillo won, 21-13.

And that was during a *Fall* semester! So hang onto your hat this Spring. You’ll want to have it handy for doffing when we take a look in the next issue of *Plugged In* at Dr. Taylor’s references to our *Fight Song* and our *Alma Mater*, both of which you no doubt already sing in the shower. Talk about preaching to the choir.



Live Here: Panhandle PBS Focuses on Local Issues

Unique Panhandle stories—about our people, our places, our feats and our foibles—are the impetus for *Live Here*, a new weekly, locally produced, half-hour program that premiered Feb. 5 on Panhandle PBS.

Live Here airs at 7 p.m. Thursdays and is designed to serve viewers in a variety of ways: as a community forum, as an affirmation of why we live where we do, and as an exposé on the plentiful travails of life in the Panhandle, where when the going gets tough, the tough become decidedly proactive.

The multi-faceted program features segments on the arts, community organizations and events, to be sure. But *Live Here* eclipses the norm when it puts the spotlight squarely on those who toil daily overcoming pitfalls or enhancing our community fundamentally, culturally and sociologically.

“Life in the Panhandle brings many blessings and also its share of challenges,” Chris Hays, general manager of Panhandle PBS, said. “*Live Here* is designed to be a forum for the entire community, a place where we can discuss and share all that makes this area such a great place to live, and what we can do to improve this exceptional place we call home.

Panhandle



We live here.

“We invite a community-wide discussion on what we should feature on *Live Here*. We hope to discover what passions we share, what we especially love about our home, and ideas that could lead to making it even better.”

Panhandle PBS invites not only community engagement but has plans to host a diverse array of community representatives to help identify topics for subsequent episodes, empowering the program’s direction.

“We will listen to and be responsive to the people of the Panhandle,” Hays said.

Each show, with additional content, will be available online at PanhandlePBS.org, after broadcast.



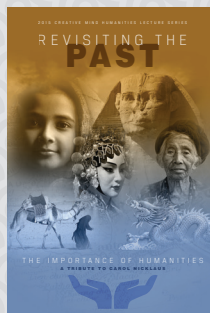
SPRING FORWARD EVENTS



DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

John Quinones, Emmy Award-winning co-host of ABC's highly rated news magazine *Primetime*—and anchor of its offshoot, *What Would You Do?*—will be the featured speaker for the 2015 installment of the Distinguished Lecture Series.

Quinones, who has been with ABC for nearly 30 years, will deliver his lecture at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 24 at the Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts. Cost of the event is \$5 for AC students and \$15 for everybody else, although \$50 will get you reserved seating and admittance to a pre-lecture reception. Call AskAC for tickets, 371-5000.



CREATIVE MIND LECTURES

The late Carol Nicklaus was a driving force in establishing the Creative Mind Humanities Lecture Series at AC. This year the Series marks its 32nd year by paying tribute March 3-5 to its beloved founder as five prominent academicians who participated in past installments of the Series return to deliver encore lectures. It will be an international potpourri titled "Revisiting the Past: The Importance of Humanities." The lectures are free and will be capped the final evening by a panel discussion. More information: Kristin Edford, 371-5205.



BLUE OCTOBER

FM90 will team up with Rock 108 to present Blue October in concert April 25 at the Civic Center. Some of the proceeds will go to the AC Food Pantry. Reserved seats are on sale now at all Panhandle Tickets locations (Civic Center Box Office and United Supermarkets) plus www.panhandletickets.com Prices are \$25, \$20 and \$15, plus service charges.



LITE LUNCHEON

The annual LITE Luncheon to raise money for scholarships that support students with disabilities is slated for 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, April 28 at the Civic Center's Heritage Room. The ever-popular silent auction is planned once again, and Feldman's will furnish the food. Tickets are \$20 in advance and can be obtained by calling disAbility Services, 345-5639.