Scholarships aid 32 Ventura College students returning to school

By Tamara Koehler
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At the tender age of pushing-50, Scott Kosche decided it was time to pick himself up off the floor and go back to college.

After undergoing knee surgery five times, the self-employed carpet and tile cleaner needed to find a different career — something easier, like teaching math at a continuation school or youth correctional facility.

That would be “awesome,” said Kosche, a single father of 14-year-old twins who...
struggles to keep his small household afloat financially.

His goal is to graduate in three years from CSU Channel Islands when his children graduate from high school.

Sara Medina is 39, a mother of two with a lot of hard decisions packed into her four decades of life. The Ventura resident carries genetic markers for breast and ovarian cancer, a discovery that led to voluntary prevention surgery.

The Ventura College re-entry student now wants to "be on the other side of a microscope" by pursuing a career in cancer research. She, too, is struggling to make ends meet while supporting a son at CSU Chico and another at home.

Kosche, Medina and 30 other Ventura College students in similar circumstances each recently received $1,000 scholarships from the Ventura College Foundation's Phoenix Scholarship program. All recipients decided to return to school at Ventura College to achieve their career goals.

The foundation board started the program 15 years ago in recognition of the hardships faced by re-entry students at Ventura College, according to Norbert Tan, executive director of the foundation.

Recipients are selected based on their academic goals and progress, financial needs, application essays and recommendations from counselors, faculty members and employers.

The program is funded entirely by local benefactors. This year, $32,000 was donated by people such as Barbara Meister, of Ventura, who funded Kosche's scholarship, and Jordan and Sandra Lavy, who funded Medina's.

Re-entry students are defined as people who return to school to learn new skills to be competitive in the marketplace or who are returning to school after an extended break.

"It was awkward at first starting school again at my age," said Kosche, who was nominated for the scholarship by college faculty members.

He is the oldest of this year's recipients.

"But the help at the community college has been great," Kosche said. "It's the best system for a student like me."

Medina and Kosche said they are deeply grateful to their benefactors.

"This couldn't come at a better time," Medina said.
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