Beth Sayer, OLP Student Professor and PICOUP Award winner

While GCC Outdoor Leadership Program (OLP) Professor Beth Sayer’s job description includes teaching a wide range of outdoor activities and skills, just one assignment up to work this week does—PICOUP. Most people haven’t heard of PICOUP, in fact, but for OLP educator, Mike, unlocking the potential in their students is a true “PICOUP” In Charge of Training Potential.

Beth’s students aren’t the only ones who know what a PICOUP is. Beth’s peers in the Northeast Region of the Association for Experiential Education, the organization that accredits the GCC Outdoor Beth this spring as recipient of the PICOUP Award.

Why did Northeast AEE create the PICOUP Award?

It all started with an index card tucked to the bulletin board above Mike Gustafson’s desk at St. Joseph’s College where he taught outdoor adventure. The card said simply “Who is the PICOUP Award?”

When a coworker asked Mike what it meant, he explained that it was a reminder about what he considered his true “job title”: Mike, unlock the potential in their students. For the students to learn technical outdoor skills, but not everyone can make a difference in someone’s life. In the work we do, we’re planting seeds. We never know what will grow from those seeds. I feel particularly fortunate to teach at GCC, where everyone is dedicated to unlocking the potential in people.

Mike was the PICOUP Award. Beth said, “In my work, I stand on the very strong shoulders of educators who have come before me and my many mentors. My path has been shaped by people who helped me see what is possible, part invitation to also make a difference in someone’s life.”

Becoming a PICOUP Award winner.

The initial gift to fund the scholarship came from Donna Donovan’s friend and neighbor, Jill Ker Conway, and has generated a large number of similar gifts from friends and family who also seek to honor the memory of Tricia Donovan.

“Our community was fortunate to benefit from the passion, energy and enthusiasm that Tricia brought to her work on the Conway Festival of the Hills Committee and as a parishioner at St. Mark’s Church,” said Conway. “I knew she brought that same dedication to her work with GCC scholars and I wanted to create a legacy that would continue to support the love of learning that she inspires in others.”

Dennis served as a GED instructor in the Franklin/Hampshire Employment Training Consortium for many years, during which time she also worked toward her PhD at the Umass School of Education in Amherst, completing her program in 2010. Her decades of work with GCC scholars who may never have received traditional education turned out not to be a good fit for her learning journey. She was a member of Mass. Coalition for Adult Education, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and served as past president of the Adults Numeracy Network.

For Conway’s initial gift to establish the scholarship fund, her husband of 30 years, Tom, noticed some friends and family members of his establishment through a letter that was part trib-ute, part invitation to also make a gift to her honor. “To honor and continue Tricia’s legacy of compas-sion and joy,” said Mr. Donovan, “we would like to help encourage scholarship in Tricia’s name so GCC can assist another scholar whose love for learning inspired us to the GED and is ready to make the next step in their education.”

He noted that the endowed scholarship would be in place to help students for years to come, and that anyone who can learn technical outdoor skills, but not everyone can make a difference in someone’s life. In the work we do, we’re planting seeds. We never know what will grow from those seeds. I feel particularly fortunate to teach at GCC, where everyone is dedicated to unlocking the potential in people.

Dennis and the GCC community to Beth’s recognition by Northeast AEE, “It is important for the College community to celebrate the accomplishments of faculty members. Beth exemplifies the spirit of GCC and the professionalization of her field. She also exemplifies what I love about GCC: the many faculty who bring such great passion and expertise to their work and the way their enthusiasm translates into student growth and learning. GCC is proud of Beth and thrilled that her colleagues in AEE recognized her with this Award.”

For more information about the Outdoor Leadership Program, visit http://www.gcc.mass.edu/give or call (413) 775-1124.

For more information about the PICOUP Award, visit http://northeast.aee.org/awards/picoup.

Educator/Author Jill Ker Conway

Establishes Tricia Donovan Scholarship Fund

Immediately following graduation all GCC alumni and community members are welcome to join in the festivities for the 50th Anniversary of this community’s college at 2 p.m. in the GCC Dining Commons.

Congratulations

Class of 2012

Graduation Events

• Sunday, June 3 9:00 am–Nurses’ Pinning Ceremony
• Sunday, June 3 12:00 pm–Commencement

An informal reception will follow in the Dining Commons. Graduates and their guests are invited.

Friday, June 22 4:00 pm–Practical Nursing Program Graduation. Ceremony will be held at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

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By Mary McClintock, ’82

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