

# The Power of Positive Thinking



## NPC Friends & Family



**Betsyann Wilson**  
Executive Director

Hello, Friend! I hope you are enjoying a good summer. At Northland Pioneer College, we are gearing up for the new academic year, with classes starting on August 26. With your help, NPC Friends and Family has awarded over \$21,000 in scholarships for the Fall 2019 semester! As always, we will focus on a couple of Spotlight Students in this newsletter, but first I want

to tell you an inspiring story about a group of achievers whose accomplishments demonstrate that we are about so much more than scholarships – and that scholarships are about so much more than financial assistance.

NPC operates a two-semester Integrated Education Technology (IET) program for adult learners with low academic skills and/or no high school diploma, and the need for work readiness skills in the area of Construction Technology. Students have the opportunity to obtain National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) and OSHA-10 certifications, Arizona Career Readiness Credentials and the GED®. The program is currently offered at NPC's Whiteriver Center on the Fort Apache Reservation.

This is an innovative and proven model for teaching and learning. The contextualized curriculum provides at-risk students with academic preparation and trade-specific skills, fast-tracking them to potential employment. Program instructor Steve Mills brings over 30 years of experience in teaching construction skills to students who are underrepresented in post-secondary education, and his belief in them and dedication to their success is one of the greatest assets any educator can possess.

The 2018-19 IET cohort was particularly vulnerable. Many were recruited from the White Mountain Apache

Tribe's Rainbow Treatment Center. They were in recovery from various addictions, and some had a history of incarceration. All of them had faltered, all needed a second chance, and all of them had very limited resources. Still all of them were motivated to learn the construction trade. They did it for themselves – to stay clean, to achieve a means of gainful employment, to win back their self-respect – but most of all they did it for their families.

In addition to setting his sights on helping each of his 15 students complete the program, Steve sought to fill a critical unmet need in assuring they were career-ready. While NPC Friends and Family supports students through scholarships, and NPC provides an excellent quality of curriculum, instruction and student support, the college was unable to close the loop in making completers fully-equipped to transition into the workplace. Low-income students are struggling just to make ends meet, so students in the IET Construction Technology program lacked the appropriate apparel,

tools and safety equipment required of entry-level job seekers in the construction field. Students in Steve's program came to class dressed in whatever

clothing and footwear was available to them, and few owned a single tool.

Together with Ken Wilk, chair of NPC's Construction Technology program, Gail Campbell,



NPC's dean of College and Career Preparation, and Rickey Jackson, acting vice president for Learning and Student Services, we wrote and submitted a grant proposal to the Del E. Webb Foundation. We were over the moon to learn that we would receive funding totaling \$44,000! Steve Mills redoubled his belief in his students and saw the grant project as a way to incentivize them to attend class regularly and perform at a high level of aptitude by providing them with the items they lacked as they completed required competencies and certifications. Enrollees received sturdy clothing, steel-toed work boots, gloves, safety glasses and hardhats. At mid-term, those who were on-track with class assignments and expectations received their own set of carpenter's hand tools, purchased from Lowe's in the community of Show Low.

Here's where the heart of this college community revealed itself, as our communities so often do when they see a need. Upon learning about the grant-funded project and its potential for helping at-risk students in Whiteriver to gain employment, Lowe's Sales Director Rex Bishop generously offered a donation of fasteners – nails, screws and bolts – and 720 square feet of composite decking, over \$4,000.00 worth of materials! Store Manager Ryan Kessler gave the final approval for his company's donation. "We were going through some product changes, and that gave us the opportunity to donate some products," he explained. "We had previously donated items to local high schools, but had not done so with Northland Pioneer College. So NPC came to mind and it worked out pretty well to donate to the Construction Technology program. Being a small community here, it's very cool to be able to help out local organizations, and any time we can do so provides us a great opportunity."

Steve's students put the donated materials to great use on their class project, the construction of tiny houses to be used as dormitories for NPC's law enforcement academy in Taylor. Construction of the tiny houses gave the students the opportunity to put into practice all the skills they were learning: framing, drywall, carpentry, electrical wiring, plumbing, concrete and masonry, as well as reading and interpreting plans and blueprints. They had their own job site at the college's Whiteriver Center. Still, it wasn't quite like working on a real construction site, with all the trades working together under deadlines.

Enter reality television. Steve learned from a tribal member that an HGTV show would be

## Spotlight Student **REUBEN WILLIAMS**

**Reuben Williams** has a passion for helping people. At sixteen years old he lost his mother to cancer, leaving him in the care of his older brothers. Reuben took a life chapter that could have embittered him and found in it a future. Being at his mother's bedside, witnessing the kindness she was shown and the care she was given by the many medical professionals – and feeling their concern and compassion for him – inspired him to pursue a career in medicine.



When his brothers could no longer afford to care for him, Reuben moved out on his own, took a job at Subway, and began his medical education, pursuing licensure as a Certified Nursing Assistant – the first step in applying for admission to the NPC Nursing associate degree program. His work ethic and excellent grades helped him to be selected for NPC's President's Scholars program, which provided him tuition through the associate degree level. He took part in an NPC Friends and Family workshop on pursuing scholarships and developing a strong scholarship essay, and he worked closely with me through several drafts to make his essay as strong as it could be. Then he applied for and won the NPC Friends and Family Fill-the-Gaps scholarship and the Jon Graff Ph.D. University Bound Scholarship!

Reuben has a drive and focus that sets him apart. He works 34 hours per week as a CNA and takes a full course load, all the while continuing to maintain excellent grades. He plans to earn his bachelor's degree in Nursing from Arizona State University, then work in the Phoenix area as a Registered Nurse, gaining knowledge and experience to apply for the Nursing Anesthesia program at Midwestern University in Glendale.

As he wrote in his scholarship essay, "People are amazing, knowledge is amazing...There is nothing that can hold me back from being a nurse anesthetist. I am destined for greatness and will overcome whatever comes in my path." There is not a doubt in my mind that Reuben will reach his goals, and that the medical profession will be the better for it.

filming a remodeling project in Canyon Day, just west of the center. His entire IET class was invited to work on-site with the construction crew, remodeling a section of an old feed store to serve as a retail space for N’dee Bikiyah – The People’s Farm. It goes without saying that the students gained valuable experience that week, but they also strengthened their bonds as a team and felt the satisfaction that comes with personal accomplishment, some perhaps for the first time. Now they knew what it was to build something for their community, from start to finish. The beautiful farm shop that they helped create is open for business.

In April, the class was honored by a visit from the president of the Del E. Webb Foundation himself, Dr. John Lees, who traveled all the way to Whiteriver from Phoenix with foundation volunteer Bill Baker. The students were excited to put a face to the name of their benefactor. They were proud to show off the tiny house, the tool and materials storage sites they built inside container units, and their classroom and indoor work space. They expressed appreciation, with one student telling Dr. Lees that he was grateful for the tools the grant provided, not only because they would put him on a level playing field with others seeking work in the construction field, but because they allowed him and his peers to help neighbors in their community with much-needed home repairs. Dr. Lees expressed how proud he was of the program, and of the involvement of the Del E. Webb Foundation.

Then came SkillsUSA. A partnership of students, instructors and industry, SkillsUSA improves the quality of Career and Technical Education

(CTE) by advancing skills that include personal, workplace and technical capabilities, grounded in academics. Students in CTE programs like Construction can participate in various competitions that enable them to demonstrate and be judged in their workplace and career readiness competencies. NPC hosted a Region 4 competition in February that included high schools and colleges from around northern Arizona. A gold medal at the regional level advances students to Arizona’s state competition; state gold medalists go to a national competition. This year, a new category of competition was piloted at the Region 4 event: Team Works. In this category, a team of students was given a building assignment that incorporates multiple trades: carpentry, electrical, masonry and plumbing. They had four hours to review the plans and construct the project. They were judged on conformity to the plans, quality of workmanship, and ability to safely function as a team. Area high schools have competed in this category in past years with great results, but NPC was the first community college in recent years to field a team in a regional competition. The four students who represented NPC were selected from the cohort of students in the Whiteriver IET program. They acquitted themselves so well that they scored high enough to advance to the state SkillsUSA competition!

Imagine being in a competition on the floor of the Phoenix Convention Center, when you have never been out of the White Mountains. The team was understandably nervous, but they were dressed in their construction clothes, equipped with their tool belts and secure

in the knowledge that they were a cohesive unit, accustomed to working together, and that Steve Mills and their fellow students believed in them. They began to gather the materials required for their project from the “storehouse” designated for the event. Almost immediately, it became apparent that some of the items were lacking. Lailani Thompson, the team’s emerging electrician, asked the judges about how to proceed without the appropriate electrical box. “Oh, just punch out a hole here and pull these wires through here...” Their response indicated she should just sort of “fake it”. “What about the ground wire?” Lailani persisted, fully understanding the importance of safety with regard to a misstep in grounding the current. Again, she was told to basically mock it up. She fixed the judges with her wise, dark eyes. “That’s not to code,” she stated flatly. They had no response to that, so she and her peers did their best with what they had and finished their project, one of the few teams to actually complete the entire build within the allotted time. That evening found the IET students from Whiteriver, Thompson, Eddie Sanchez and Monte Stover, on the podium with silver medals around their necks.

The final project of the year was a two-day field trip to K. Hovnanian Homes in the Phoenix area, where they visited a working construction site and learned firsthand about how to gain entry-level jobs in the various trades. Only nine students were able to attend. Two had failed to succeed and persist in the program and had to be dropped... but four had already received job offers and begun work! While they would go on to complete the didactic portion of the IET program, they could not take two full days away from their new jobs – as roofers, framers and drywall installers – to take part in a field trip. Instructor Steve Mills sent word of the success of the trip

## The impact of a donation

NPC’s size and affordability allows your donation to go much further!

### What’s covered by an \$888 donation?



in an early morning email to NPC administrators:

“As an educator for many years and having been a contractor, I could not have asked people to give more than my students did the past two days. They represented the school very well and were a model group to take for the first time on this type of event. The Del Webb Foundation would be proud of what they have helped build!

Today our nine students met with seven contractors and walked away with over 27 job offers! I spoke with several of the contractors (concrete, framers, plumbing, electrical, stucco, masonry, window manufacture, and soils testing and analysis lab) and they all commented on how impressed they were with our students. To say the least, the van ride home was very busy with conversation on which offers they would take! Reality will set in and Tuesday will be a lesson on “How do I move to the Valley and survive?!”

The 2018-19 cohort of 13 IET completers were honored at a ceremony on May 7 at the Whiteriver Center. A rainstorm, unusual for May in Arizona but nonetheless welcomed in a region so affected by wildfire, moved the affair indoors. The classroom was packed with over

100 family members, friends, White Mountain Apache tribal leaders and college dignitaries, including NPC President Mark Vest, acting Vice President Rickey Jackson and NPC District Governing Board member and White Mountain Apache Tribe Higher Education Director Derrick Leslie. Lowe’s Store Manager Ryan Kessler and Sales Director Rex Bishop made the trip from Show Low to honor the class. Each graduate received a set of cordless power tools, funded by the grant, making them fully equipped to pursue entry-level employment in the construction field. In a resounding testament to the success of the grant-funded project, the support of the community and the dedication of Steve Mills, five of the completers already had jobs. Several are continuing at Northland Pioneer College to complete associate degrees. One of these, Vaughn Willeto, welcomed a new son right after the ceremony. Read more about him in our Student Spotlights.

A second cohort of students, supported by the Del E. Webb Foundation grant, will begin classes in the IET Construction Technology program with Steve Mills in August 2019. As with the first cohort, they will be embarking on a journey of self-discovery. It’s a chance to make a new start, to grow, to accomplish, to

gain knowledge and to obtain skills they will use for the rest of their lives. Steve will have high expectations for them, he will push them to go out of familiar territory, to learn, to practice and to master. Most importantly, they will know that he respects them and that he believes in them – this though they may not yet believe in themselves.

This conviction is reinforced by the good people at Del E. Webb and people like you who demonstrate your faith in underserved, underrepresented, non-traditional college students through your support of the scholarships that make it possible for them to pursue a post-secondary education, and to succeed in spite of all that stands behind and before them. When I began as executive director of NPC Friends and Family in Fall 2014, I thought it was important to provide the financial means that were so sorely lacking for so many NPC students. It is indeed vitally important, but at least as critical is the validation it brings to our students’ efforts. Your gifts are an acknowledgment that someone else cares about them, that someone else knows how hard it is to do what they are doing, and that someone else believes they will prevail. And so they do.

## In Brief: **Planned Giving**

You can leave a lasting legacy for the students of Northland Pioneer College. Many NPC supporters find they can make a meaningful and substantial gift through a planned giving arrangement called a bequest with NPC Friends and Family. Bequests can be set up in several ways, but all involve directives in your will to provide a gift to NPC Friends and Family after your death. Frequent forms of bequests are gifts such as insurance, with NPC Friends and Family named as your beneficiary or gifts of a specific dollar amount or specific assets, such as securities, real estate or personal property. Trust funds can be used as bequests, including those that generate income paid to you during your lifetime, with the principal going to NPC Friends and Family and can include residuary bequests that give all or a portion of the remainder of your estate after payment of expenses and any specific amounts designated to other beneficiaries.

A bequest gives you the opportunity to designate the way in which NPC Friends and Family can use your gift, including as a specific, named scholarship or in support of a particular college program or facility. Unrestricted gifts however, provide NPC Friends and Family with the flexibility to address emerging priorities and use private funds wherever need is greatest. The choice is yours. In an era of declining state funding, your bequest is more important than ever in providing support to the students of NPC and to college programs and facilities.

Your attorney or financial advisor can assist you in deciding the best way to make an enduring bequest to NPC Friends and Family that can potentially protect and preserve your assets, provide you with tax benefits and support NPC students in the way that means the most to you. For help in learning about how to establish these kinds of gifts, please contact Betsyann Wilson at 928-536-6245 or [betsy.wilson@npc.edu](mailto:betsy.wilson@npc.edu).

## Spotlight Student – VAUGHN WILLETO



Vaughn Willeto (Gold shirt) with instructor Steve Mills

**Vaughn Willeto** didn't finish high school. As a youth, he ran with the wrong crowd and got into trouble. He was on a downward trajectory, and he needed a fresh start.

Thanks to Northland Pioneer College's IET program (Integrated Education and Training), Willeto is now a model of overcoming a tough start in life and moving toward a promising career.

During this academic year, Willeto and other IET students in Whiteriver built tiny homes that will be used to house NPC police academy students in Taylor. Willeto emerged as a leader in his class, and instructor Steve Mills said Vaughn is the kind of student every teacher hopes for. "Vaughn has the one thing that will make him successful with whatever he does: work ethic. He attends school full-time, works full-time and still manages to be a family man in his spare time. He secured an excellent

job before the IET class ended in the spring"

As a teen in New Mexico, Willeto went to school through the 11th grade. He says he got into trouble a lot and knew he needed to make a change in his life. At the age of 19, he moved to Phoenix and learned welding at Arizona Automotive Institute. He met his wife and started a family,

and "Then it all changed for me." They moved to Whiteriver in 2014, and last fall he enrolled in the IET program.

Willeto is one of the first recipients of the new Jon Graff, Ph.D., Fund Scholarship at NPC. He wrote in his scholarship essay, "When me and my wife first got married and knew we were expecting a baby boy, I kept

thinking back to my life before I had either of them in my life and thought about all of the wrongs and bad choices I wish I could take back. I thought about my criminal record as a juvenile and about my past of gang affiliation, drug use and alcohol. I knew that all the new love that entered my life made me want to change my ways and wish I had done more in my young adult hood to put my family in a better position than where we were starting out from. [Having] this scholarship means I know that I will be able to finish my construction degree for me and be an example to other Native

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people that no matter how bad or ugly your life may have started out and gotten, it's never too

late to make changes that will keep making better changes for years to come."



# Make a Difference – Donate Today!

NPC students are succeeding in spite of all the odds. Many are the first generation in their families to attend college. Lots of adults are coming back to school while coping with the responsibilities of caring for children or elderly parents. Most have incredible financial need and they succeed because of the scholarships made possible, and sustained by generous people like you!

**YES! I want to donate to NPC Friends and Family and help support NPC student scholarships.**

**Tax deductible donations can be made online via credit/debit card at [www.npcfriendingfamily.org](http://www.npcfriendingfamily.org)** by clicking the “donate” button.

Donations can also be made by using this form and the included postage-paid return envelope. Make your check or money order payable to NPC Friends and Family. **THANK YOU!**

Please add my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the following:

- Jon Graff, Ph.D Fund** – Provides scholarships for NPC students who are university bound, career bound (enrolled in Career and Technical Education) or college-bound (enrolled in College and Career Prep)
- Jeanne Swarthout, Ph.D, Presidential Excellence Scholarship** – For degree-seeking students with a GPA of 3.5 at the time of application.
- Martia A. Smith Memorial Art Scholarship** – For all full-time, degree-seeking students
- Pres Winslow Memorial Scholarship** – For high school graduates enrolled at NPC
- Claude Endfield Early Childhood Development Scholarship** – For degree-seeking students in the ECD program
- Charles E. Lisitzky Memorial Scholarship** – For Native American students
- VAL 153 Memorial Scholarship** – For women in Fire Science and Paramedicine (EMT) programs
- Eagle Fund** – Unrestricted scholarships for students in greatest financial need

**What your donation looks like as tuition:**

**\$77** - Provides one credit of tuition

**\$222** - Provides tuition for one three-credit class

**\$444** - Provides tuition for one student to attend half-time

**\$888** - Provides tuition for one student to attend full-time (12 credits)

You can learn more about and also give to NPC Friends and Family at [www.npcfriendingfamily.org](http://www.npcfriendingfamily.org)

**Begin a legacy –  
Help students in need by  
starting your own scholarship**

**Please contact me at:**

(Phone or Email)

so I can discuss how to create an  
NPC scholarship fund.

*Thank you, for your continued support and donation.*

*NPC Friends and Family is a 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible.*