For Immediate Release
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Curiosity Drives Success For LCC Top Scholars

Lower Columbia College students Kathren Rintoul of Rainier and Brett Merritt of Longview share a common fascination with learning WHY things work. That curiosity serves the pair well in their work at LCC’s popular Tutoring Center. Both are well versed in their subjects, have completed national certification training and enjoy helping others.

This spring they also share honors as LCC members of the All-Washington Academic Team. The program annually showcases community and technical college students who have demonstrated a commitment to success in the classroom and in their communities. On March 22, Gov. Chris Gregoire recognized the 66 students selected for the 2012 academic team at a ceremony in Olympia. Kate and Brett each received a medallion from the Governor and a $750 scholarship. Kate was one of eight students awarded an additional $250 scholarship from the Washington School Employees Credit Union.

Childhood illness spawns writing interest

Kate Rintoul, 20, has loved to write since childhood illness trapped her indoors, where she entertained herself by making up stories. She hopes to make writing—especially screen-writing—her career.

Kate, who has a 3.85 GPA, was homeschooled, and helped teach her younger siblings, perfect training for her work at the Tutoring Center where she helps students with English, math, Spanish and speech classes. “I love seeing someone’s face light up when they ‘get it.’”

Learning why a math problem is solved with a specific process or why English sentences are constructed in a certain sequence helped Kate better understand both subjects. She uses that same method, learned from her favorite Math instructor at LCC, in her tutoring work.

As recording officer of LCC’s Gamma Tau chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (national two-year college honor society), she’s helping with a special project, to create a free tutoring center for local middle school and high school students. “We know this works,” she says. LCC students are meeting with community leaders on the specifics of developing such as center. The idea is still coming together, but they are confident it will happen.

Kate also helps out in her father’s gun and ammunition business, and has grown into an outdoorswoman and hunter. Her claim to fame is bagging a yak on wild game hunting trip. “I don’t know cars, but I can talk guns,” she says.

Understanding the learning process drives career change

Brett Merritt, 26, has so many interests that it’s taken him a while to settle on one. He is most interested in contributing knowledge to the world through research. Cognitive Science—how we think and learn—fascinates him.
"A lot of instruction focuses on memorizing processes, but I think that understanding why something works is most important. It’s the same with English. Getting the idea across is the most important thing,” he says.

Brett was home-schooled by his parents, both teachers. Then he came to LCC, earned an Associate in Applied Science degree in Machine Trades and worked as a machinist.

While he likes making things, Brett also enjoys thinking deeply. So he returned to LCC and explored Sociology, Psychology and Photography while working part-time as the Photo Lab Assistant.

He has maintained an impressive 3.97 GPA and works in the Tutoring Center, helping students with Speech, English and several levels of Math. Like many students, he put off taking Math classes. He took Pre-Calculus fall quarter and Calculus winter quarter. “I realized that I had been avoiding math, but I was quite capable of it,” Brett says.

Brett also enjoys exploring in his rowboat, hiking, and “just being outside.”

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