

# CLARK'S 70TH GRADUATION



MIKE SALSBURY/The Columbian

**Rachel Shaner, right, hugs classmate Tracy Eyer prior to the start of Clark College's commencement ceremony Thursday evening. The event honored more than 1,100 graduates. The two became friends while taking classes on early childhood education and working together on campus, said Eyer, who has since moved to Oregon.**

# Governor salutes, challenges Class of 2006

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**Gov. Gregoire**

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By **HOWARD BUCK**  
*Columbian staff writer*

Blue gowns, bagpipes, a 6-foot-tall penguin and the governor.

Coming together on Thursday, it could only mean one thing: Clark College's 70th commencement ceremony, celebrated by students, faculty, family and friends at The Amphitheater at Clark County.

Gov. Chris Gregoire, greeted by students' ovation on a balmy evening, warmed the occasion with a light touch. She guessed nearly all of them were of the same mind: "The only thing

standing between me and partying is this lady giving the commencement address," she said, earning laughs.

Then Gregoire grew serious, noting how the world has evolved, fueled by technology but better summed up in a single word: globalization. "It is the defining characteristic of this generation and this century," the governor told graduates.

"You've come this far, and your education will launch you to wherever you want to go, whatever you choose to do. It's just that your strength and greatness as stu-

dents will now go head-to-head with the strength and greatness of a few billion folks more than I faced in my pre-Internet, pre-globalized generation," she said.

More than 1,100 Clark students were honored for success in completing two-year academic programs or certification in a soaring number of professional and technical studies in 2005-06. Included were 59 high-school Running Start students.

Gregoire said Washington state was on the "front lines" of

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FACULTY

■ **BRENDA KNUTSON**, dental hygiene instructor. She is credited with modeling positive encouragement, teamwork and community service that transcends the classroom and a rigorous curriculum. "Brenda holds us to excellence because she expects nothing less from herself," one student noted.

■ **CHRIS MILNER**, mathematics instructor. His passion for math and student success proves contagious even among those who previously struggled with math, thanks to his humor and straightforward examples, patience and commitment.

■ **BETH HERON**, metal arts instructor. Deftly switching from tasks requiring complex physical skills, such as welding or use of oxy-acetylene torches, to sensitive detail artwork such as jewelry, she accents the positive for students of all ages and stripes. "She is the essence of an exceptional teacher," noted one student.

STAFF

■ **BARBARA DAVENPORT**, credentials evaluator for health occupations programs. A Clark alumna and former peer adviser, she guides students through complicated steps toward success in chosen health care fields with a sensitivity that motivates all around her. "She's unfailingly positive and supportive," one instructor noted.

■ **JEANETTE STEINMUELLER**, accounting tutor for business administration students. With CPA credentials and solid work experience backed by a systematic approach, she offers students exceptional patience and insight into "the thornier issues" of accounting, as one student noted.

# Clark:

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globalization, dependent on world commerce while also helping to lead the globe with wired innovations and good, old-fashioned agriculture, largely dependent itself on the Columbia River and other threatened natural resources.

She challenged the graduates to support improved education, safeguard the environment and give back to the community.

"These times will test us, I'm sure of this. But I'm certain each of you is up to the challenge," she said.

Drawing from her own days as a social caseworker, long before serving three terms as state attorney general and then governor, Gregoire reminded graduates of the power they will hold in their chosen fields.

She cited a letter from the mother of a badly abused young girl whose case she handled long ago. That girl had just graduated from Eastern Washington University, and was working toward a master's social work degree, to assist others. The girl had been inspired by her own casework, the mother wrote.

"Little did I know I could have such impact," Gregoire said. "It tells me that every one of you can make a significant difference in the lives of another human being."

A fine example was the 2006 Presidential Scholarship Award winner, Pamela Sullivan of Vancouver, who got the good news directly from Wayne Branch, Clark president.

After raising three children through college, caring for a disabled brother and working 18 years for a local law firm, Sul-



MIKE SALSBUURY/The Columbian

**Gov. Chris Gregoire gave the commencement address at the Clark College graduation ceremony.**

livan will get two years' free tuition at Washington State University Vancouver to complete her program. She hopes to teach paralegal courses at Clark and continue to advocate for seniors and juvenile offenders.

The governor's worldly theme resonated with Clark graduates intent on keeping up with job trends, a need community and technical colleges are primed to meet. Megan Casey, new holder of an associate's degree, will now shy away from a pharmaceutical sales career, in favor of radiology technology.

"It's changing rapidly. It's less lucrative and (more competitive)," she said of the sales profession. In the radiology field, "My mom's telling me people will be waiting to hire me."

Cyndi Kennedy, one of 16 students to earn a medical office specialist degree and certification, has already seen classmates snatched up. A former SEH America supervisor laid off in light of global market pressures, she's commuted from Hood River, Ore., for two-plus years to attend Clark's well-regarded program.

"I'm not worried at all. There's a lot of jobs out there," Kennedy said.