Couple's plunge into Clark College bears fruit
Illness prompted career change, pursuit of studies

By HOWARD DUCK
Columbian staff writer

Ted Dejovy didn't realize that winter day in early 2009 just how much his life would change.

He was suddenly struck with double vision, bad enough to make the drive home from his Vancou-

Ver apartment to his job as a special education teacher at a local high school nearly impossible.

He was diagnosed with the onset of a serious condition: a scarring of the central nervous system, caused by stress and physical exertion, that would set him back to his days of physical, blue-collar work.

But the condition did push him to a major life decision: he had been working as an orthodontist for years. He took a leave of absence and went back to school to study dentistry.

A year later, he graduated with honors and now practices dentistry in the area.

He credits the illness with giving him a second chance to pursue his passion and realize his full potential.

Dejovy believes that the illness was a wake-up call for him to make changes in his life and pursue his true calling.

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“[The illness] was a wake-up call for me to make changes in my life and pursue my true calling,” Dejovy said. “I am grateful for the experience and the lessons it taught me about resilience and perseverance.”

Emboldened by a health issue that forced a career change, Ted Dejovy earned a degree in Web design and development from Clark College and is already working out of his home office. He will join nearly 400 other graduates at commencement ceremonies Thursday. He will graduate with honors, becoming the first in his family to earn a college degree.

Baird sees progress in Iraq during Middle East trip

But Vancouver Democrat says U.S. should delay withdrawal of troops

BY KATHIE PURDUE
Columbian staff writer

On what could be his final congressional visit to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, U.S. Rep. Brian Baird found reason for guarded hope in Iraq.


The Vancouver Democrat, who supported President George W. Bush's 2007 troop surge in Iraq, said he saw clear evidence of progress. Results of the recent Iraqi election have been certified, he noted, and the withdrawal of American combat troops is proceeding.

President Barack Obama has announced that he plans to withdraw all U.S. combat troops from Iraq by the end of August 2010, leaving between 35,000 and 50,000 military troops to help train and equip Iraq's armed forces.

Baird said it may be time to put the brakes on that withdrawal, at least temporarily.

Iraqis are "forming a coalition government," he said. "There's an impression on the ground that people want this politically and not through violence.

But it's important the political situation in Iraq is resolved before the U.S. completes the withdrawal and hands off combat responsibilities to the Iraqis, he said.

"We have spent too many lives, too much money. They have made tremendous progress. If we have to delay five or six months to get it right, that would be time well spent.

For one thing, it's not clear that enough Iraqis have been trained to help repel terrorist and maintain the nation's infrastructure, he said.

"They are having to train up a whole new generation of technicians. Will they be ready to take the kind of reins that the current schedule has built into?"

A recent spurt in violence in Iraq led the administration to announce in May it was likely to delay the withdrawal of the first group of combat troops from the country for at least a month beyond the scheduled Aug. 31 date.

Baird also commented on the Israeli military's May 31 attack on a flotilla carrying supplies to the residents of Gaza, which occurred while he was in the region. The commander railed against "intercept ships that could be used by Hamas, Gaza's ruling party, for possible military strikes against Israel. It killed nine pro-Palestinian activists and triggered demonstrations throughout the world."
Grad:

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"It's the biggest achievement of my life. Really, it's like getting to the top of Mount Everest," said Dejony, a 10th grade high school dropout. "There were times I didn't think I was going to make it. But I've been able to push through."

He did better than that, even as he scaled back to part-time classes to preserve his health. Dejony will wear the crimson tassels of an honor student over his blue Clark gown after pulling a 3.7 grade point average. He's also the first Dejony family member to earn a college degree.

His aptitude for Web design has already won him several contract jobs after he completed his coursework in March.

Clients include Millar's Organic Coffee and Autotamp.com, Original Espresso and Sick Industries (custom auto detailing). They pay Dejony good money for the "back-end" Web page work: Setting up or rebuilding the shopping carts, blogs and other features that drive a successful website in 2010.

"You look at something that looks pretty simple, but there's 200 hours involved making it work," he said.

Actually, Dejony has always had the computer gene, a knack, a bug: "You were, like, a natural," said Christine, chuckling.

What he lacked was any savvy in the whole college thing. That's what held him back, even after he earned a GED high school diploma in the 1990s while he moved through solid jobs in Alaska, then Vancouver.

And so, Christine joined him to take the plunge. They enrolled in Clark together, with her entering paralegal training.

"We kind of took an assessment of where we were in life, and what we were going to do," Dejony said.

Side by side, they tackled the paperwork. They sought out counseling to navigate the maze of financial aid.

"I'm pumped. It's been a battle, it's been a hard road, but I did it."

Ted Dejony
Clark College graduate

BPA to spend $2B to update infrastructure work, boosting fish numbers

By SHANNON DININNY
Associated Press writer

YAKIMA — Bonneville Power Administration will spend roughly $2 billion in federal stimulus dollars to enhance power transmission lines, upgrade aging infrastructure at hydropower dams and restore fish populations, it announced Tuesday.

The federal stimulus money approved by Congress allowed BPA to borrow an additional $3.25 billion from the U.S. Treasury, increasing the total amount of bonds that may be outstanding to $7.7 billion.

BPA announced the first $2 billion in projects during a visit by Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman, who assessed progress on one of the largest: construction of a 500-kilovolt transmission line between McNary and John Day dams.

"This important investment in the Northwest is an example of how the Recovery Act at work — jump-starting the economy, modernizing our nation’s infrastructure, delivering renewable energy and enhancing energy independence," he said in a statement.

Overall, BPA plans to spend about $1 billion for large power transmission projects, including..."