

RAMS MONTHLY



STORIES OF STUDENT SUCCESS AND LEARNING AT VICTOR VALLEY COLLEGE



FACULTY GETS FEATURED IN STAR TREK HISTORY DOC

*History Channel Interviews VVC History Professor
Wesley Willison*

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IE Women Convo Recap



(Above) TASHA CHAMPION - Featured guest speaker at women-lead event at VVC.

Recently, Victor Valley College hosted "A Conversation with Women of the Inland Empire" which brought together women from the surrounding community to discuss issues facing women in the region. The event featured a panel of speakers who shared their experiences and perspectives on a range of topics, including health care, education, and economic empowerment. The event, hosted by La Dulce Vida and VVC's ASB saw attendees having the opportunity to ask questions and engage in a dialogue with the panelists, as well as network with other women in the community.

Community influencer and author, Tasha Champion, was a featured speaker at the first annual speaker event. Champion said, "Empowerment means to awaken a light and truth within that connects you back to the knowing that you can be, do, and have the things you desire. As children we have this knowing so innocently and freely of what we want to do and have. We dream of the things we want and 100% believe it is possible. As we get older, family and society unintentionally remove it from us. We are implanted with more self-doubt about our goals and dreams and empowerment guides us back to that knowing that we can reach those goals and make our dreams come true."

Each panelists provided valuable insights and perspectives on a range of issues, from access to healthcare to strategies for advancing in the workforce. VVC Director of Tutoring and Academic Support, Elizabeth Duarte said "The women in attendance expressed their 'heart was full' as they heard fellow women share their success and the challenges they overcame to evolve in today's innovative world!"



VVC ASB visits Washington DC

Student leaders attend annual conference for advocacy



The Associated Student Body (ASB) at Victor Valley College recently embarked on an unforgettable trip to the nation's capital, Washington D.C. The group spent a week exploring the city's many historical and cultural landmarks, as well as meeting with elected officials and leaders to learn about the nation's political system. The trip was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the ASB members to deepen their knowledge of U.S. history and government and to gain valuable leadership skills.

During their visit, the ASB members had the opportunity to visit iconic sites such as the U.S. Capitol, helped volunteer at the Cherry Blossom Festival, and visited the offices of representatives from California's congressional delegation such as U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein (California) and Assemblyman Jay Obernolte (Hesperia) to discuss issues affecting their community.

The trip was a valuable learning experience

for the ASB members, who were able to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of civic engagement and the role of youth in shaping the country's future. The ASB members returned to Victor Valley College with a renewed sense of purpose and motivation to serve their college community and to continue their advocacy efforts. The experience was a testament to the ASB's commitment to leadership and community service and to the college's mission to provide its students with a well-rounded education that prepares them for success in their careers and personal lives.

SEE ASB'S D.C. COLLAGE ON PAGE 8 & 9

California Assemblyman Tom Lackey Visits VVC



(Left to right) VVC PIO Robert Sewell gives Asm. Tom Lackey (R) a tour of upper campus.

California Assemblyman Tom Lackey (R) visited Victor Valley College during a recent trip to the Victor Valley community. Assemblyman Lackey represents the 36th Assembly District, which includes portions of Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties. VVC is part of Lackey's district.

During his visit, Lackey visited with Victor Valley College officials to discuss challenges

related to higher education, workforce development, and the future of California's economy. Lackey took a guided tour of the VVC campus which included a trip around the lake, walkthrough of facilities, and a roundtable discussion with local college leaders.

"We are honored to have Assemblyman Lackey visit Victor Valley College and learn about the valuable work we do to prepare our students

for successful careers," said Dr. Daniel Walden, President of Victor Valley College. "His visit provides an opportunity for us to showcase our innovative programs and partnerships with local businesses that contribute to the economic vitality of the region."

Assemblyman Lackey has a strong record of supporting higher education and workforce development initiatives. He is a member of the Assembly Higher Education Committee and the Select Committee on Career Technical Education and Building a 21st Century Workforce. He has worked to secure funding for career technical education programs and initiatives to address California's workforce needs.



California Assemblymember Juan Carrillo Visits VVC

California's District 39 Assemblymember Juan Carrillo visited Victor Valley College to take a tour of the campus and meet with staff and faculty. Carrillo participated in an enlightening roundtable discussion with several VVC leaders to learn more about the campus, students and programs offered to the community at-large.

During the visit, Carrillo was able to see firsthand the college's lower campus facilities, including the automotive, welding and the Agriculture and Natural Resource Department. Carrillo touched on how much value CTE training has impacted his life personally and how impressed he was with the way CTE courses are provided to students in the High Desert community at Victor Valley College.

During the roundtable discussion, Carrillo appeared impressed by VVC's commitment to

providing quality education to the residents of the Victor Valley region and praised the college for its dedication to student success. "VVC is doing amazing work to provide affordable education and career opportunities for our region, and I'm excited to see what we can accomplish together," said Carrillo.

Victor Valley College President Dr. Daniel Walden expressed his gratitude to Carrillo for taking the time to visit the campus and learn more about the college. "We are honored to have had Assemblymember Carrillo visit our campus and see the incredible work that is being done here," said Dr. Walden. "We look forward to partnering with our elected officials to ensure that our students have access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed."



VVC Dean of Public Safety & Industrial Technology McKenzie Tarango (right) curated the roundtable conversation with Asm. Juan Carrillo (D) (left).

Student Spotlight: Meet Andrew



April is also known as Autism Awareness Month. Rams Monthly spoke to VVC Rams student Andrew Langlois about some of his student success despite challenges he faces.

Did you know that according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that an estimated 5,437,988 (2.21%) adults in the United States have ASD also known as Autism Spectrum Disorder. The month of April has been designated as Autism Awareness Month.

Autism is known to impact the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction, communication skills, and cognitive function. People who live with autism typically have difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities. However, people with autism can still learn and go to school and live normal lives, just in a different way. Victor Valley College's inclusive student population also includes those apart of the autism community. We had the unique opportunity to sit down with Andrew who recently started attending VVC just last year.

Andrew, who is 39 years old grew up in the San Gabriel Valley, moving to the High Desert in 2009. He says that he has friends at VVC and they've been helpful with giving him advice to better his student experience. Andrew says

he's very independent and during the pandemic he had nothing to really do, so he started to look into going back to school. For Andrew, VVC goes far beyond just an education. His student ID allows him to ride the local transit bus anywhere in the High Desert which allows him to be mobile since he doesn't have a car. Andrew has a supportive living instructor who helps guide him through everyday life. Andrew is excited about his studies at the campus and has chosen to pursue an education in Horticulture. One of his favorite plants as he describes are squash and bean sprouts because of the way they grow. "I want to get into propagation, we need it in the High Desert. We can put nutrients back in the soil, it improves crop growing," says Andrew.

VVC has provided Andrew a good balance in life. Growing up, Andrew says he had difficulties and challenges staying focused, however, he's also introverted and says he's impressionable with familiar faces.

Andrew also is very versed in several resource opportunities provided at VVC, including the ACCESS Resource Center located in Building 23. The center provides individualized

accommodations and services to students with various disabilities who are determined eligible for the program. Students with disabilities which could impact their academic experience at Victor Valley College and who want to receive services, have an option to apply at the ACCESS office located inside Building 23.

Eligible students will meet with an ACCESS counselor or Learning Disabilities Specialist to determine individualized accommodations for learning. Accommodations may include, but are not limited to: alternative testing, academic and vocational counseling, priority registration assistance, text in alternative format, note taking assistance, sign language interpreters, ACT Center referral, study skills instruction, equipment loans, liaison with faculty, and referral to public agencies.

ACCESS Courses - ACCESS also offers courses in the area of disability related issues designed to provide information, support, and strategies to students with disabilities.

RACIAL REFORM

Recently, Victor Valley College had the honor to host Dr. J. Luke Wood in a discussion about decolonization and racial reform in community colleges.

Dr. Luke Wood, Ph.D. is the Vice President for Student Affairs and Campus Diversity and Chief Diversity Officer at San Diego State University. He is also the Dean's Distinguished Professor of Education and a tenured full Professor in the Department of Administration, Rehabilitation and Post-Secondary Education at SDSU. According to the book "The Black in the Crimson and Black", Dr. Wood is the first and only Distinguished Professor of Black/African American descent in SDSU's history. He joined SDSU in 2011 and is an active researcher and equity-driven leader. The event was made possible through the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee at VVC.

Wood's research focuses on racial equity in education with a specific focus on early childhood education and community college. In particular, his research examines contributors to positive outcomes for Black students and men of color. With Frank Harris III, Wood coined the phrase "racelighting" to refer to interpersonal experiences with racism that lead BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) to second-guess their experiences, perceptions, contributions, and realities.

Source: Henry Young, D.BA

(Right) Dr. Luke Wood enlightens the audience by discussing the significance of racelighting people of color in community colleges.

Image Source: Andrew Caravella





VVC History Professor Boldy Goes the Distance in new Star Trek doc

Story by: Andrew Caravella

VVC part-time faculty instructor Wesley Willison takes a photo with the ST: TNG and ST: Picard Season 3 cast during a previous convention.

A VVC History professor boldly goes where no VVC professor has gone before... film a documentary for the History Channel.

Part time faculty History professor Wesley Willison is featured on a new Star Trek documentary called: "The Center Seat, 55 Years of Star Trek." - The doc is said to chronicle rare and fascinating details of how "Star Trek" began, where it's been, and how it's going where no television series has gone before.

Willison says that he's happy to join the VVC team, "So far at VVC the last three semesters I have taught Women In American History (Hist 155), California History (Hist.115), Early American History (Hist. 117) and Modern American History (History 118). I believe it is important to be knowledgeable about all History and to be flexible in regards to what I can and do teach."

Willison had quite a unique upbringing before coming to VVC. As a child he appeared out of cages of fire in his parent's magic show, eventually evolving into a stage Ventriloquist. As a young adult Willison attended community college, then university and in the process earned his Masters in History, Masters in Education with a Focus in Digital Teaching and Learning and a Multiple Subject Clear Credential. "I can't imagine being a Professor without being an entertainer first," jokes Willison.

He credits Indiana Jones films and his grandparents for helping him discover a passion for History. "As a kid I spent long hours and days with them, and my grandparents were born in 1916, 1920 and 1930 respectively. So their perspective was a vast one across the twentieth Century. My Grandpa Clarence

'Willie' Willison ran liquor during prohibition, shined Al Capone's shoes, and served in World War II. My Grandma Freda was a 'Rosie the Riveter' during World War II and my Grandma Martha being the youngest was in the generation of the 'Bobby Sox' girls during World War II. All of them grew up or were adults during the Great Depression and were witness to probably one of the most eventful centuries in human history, the 20th Century. So growing up with these stories, and their histories was pivotal to planting the seeds and growing my passion for History.

Willison says he was asked specifically to be filmed for the ST: Voyager based episode of the documentary, Willison partially booked the gig because of his History background, education and passion for Women's History.

With over 1000 televised hours of Star Trek



and 13 films, Willison says it's difficult to pick a favorite, "As far as the films I would say that Star Trek The Motion Picture is my favorite as it truly showed the vastness of space and a threat as a result of sending a probe into space and what could happen. But spoiler alert, it was a Voyager spacecraft, that was captured by machine beings and sent out with its programming to find its creator," jokes Willison.

As far as a Star Trek TV series, Star Trek Deep Space Nine (1993-1999) is his favorite. "Deep Space Nine did so much to advance Roddenberry's vision, it was also inclusive with its stories, characters, etc. It was progressive with LGBTQ+ themes, strong women, the characters were diverse including an African American Captain, Sisko, who was raising his son alone, a former terrorist turned first officer, Major Kira."

Who is your favorite Starfleet officer or Star Trek character and why?

"That is a tie between Captain Janeway, Sisko and Picard. Picard is such a powerful force and moral compass. Sisko for his morals and values and the fact he was a good dad while dealing with the numerous crises at Deep Space Nine. Janeway, a powerful woman who was dedicated to getting her crew home regardless of the costs and the 70 year journey. She remained steadfast, tough and determined under horrible circumstances and kept her eye on the mission of returning her crew safely home. While they made mistakes, I believe that the three of these characters, Picard, Sisko and Janeway promote some of the best of our human characteristics."

Willison also explains that Gene Roddenberry, the creator of Star Trek, had a vision of inclusivity way back in the 1960's when he first developed Star Trek. The power and content of this message has evolved and resonates with our society today according to Willison who also says that "the producers since have expanded upon [Gene's] vision so much and have included African American Captains, Female Captains, Gay members of the crew, Non-Binary members of the crew and so on. No generation is perfect and we are on a long road to acceptance of all people and loving all people and respecting everyone's place in society. Spock had a symbol called IDIC, Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combination. I believe we are getting closer to that reality, it may not happen today or tomorrow but we are getting there. Humanity takes baby steps and sometimes one step forward and two back."

We as a society must find solutions for so many issues, but, when we work together, humanity is a powerful force. In our politics and society we become so distracted by issues created and we must turn our focus on our future. What do we want to leave our kids and grandchildren? I believe in humanity and our ability to do great things. I also believe that space is a unifying factor so many technologies we benefit from today come from our space program. There are bigger things in the universe and we as humanity must come together to explore them and explore ourselves and not be distracted. .

Willison shared with us some previous background knowledge about actress Kate Mulgrew (Captain Janeway) who he met in real life when he was just 7 years old.

"... Voyager had just aired and I already had a great respect for the character of Janeway and for Kate Mulgrew! I was lucky to meet her when Voyager first aired in 1995. As mentioned I was seven and sat in the auditorium listening to her speak. I was so impressed by her, she is educated, and a strong woman."

During the Q&A some middle aged male fan comes up and states that the 'Jury is still out on you as an actor on the show, and if a woman could lead a Star Trek series and Janeway herself and that it's a mistake to put a woman as a lead.' This was the kind of sexist and disgusting reception she received when the show aired and many people forget now, nearly 30 years later. She didn't appear at another convention for years."

Star Trek conventions tend to have some most loyal fandoms and something of this nature is generally a shocking moment for any loyal trekkie to witness. Willison went on to describe how the vile moment affected him so much, even as a kid, "I have been inspired by so many strong women in my life, and this 'fans' behavior is so abhorrent to me. How did that affect kids like me listening in the audience, we will never know. There should be no place for sexism, racism, bigotry, hatred or anything else along those lines in our society. So, I recount that story and others in the series and discuss the importance of strong women in fiction from a Historical perspective. I have also had the pleasure of meeting so many of the Star Trek actors and creatives. I was also an extra in the 2009 Star Trek film. Also as a result of my participation in the documentary my VVC students found that I have an IMDB (Internet Movie Database) profile right up there with Harrison Ford, Dwayne Johnson and Sir Patrick Stewart!"

Willison wrapped our conversation by speaking highly about VVC and how great the energy is from students and staff, "If you can dream it you can do it!" Willison joked about not sounding too cliché, "...as I reflect on my life at this vantage point now being at the last part of the Sinatra Song 'It Was a Very Good Year,' I realize that I stayed the course, it didn't matter that I had 'friends' telling me there was no opportunity in education, or that there wasn't a career in teaching, I had the long term plan and ignored temporary trends and kept the goal of being a professor and teacher. It was far from an easy road and at times I was so poor I couldn't even afford Top Ramen. I had Professors encouraging me to drop out of college because I got a C in a class my first semester and I came of age in 2008 during what I like to call the 'second Great Depression.' There is light at the end of the tunnel and like my mom always said 'today is a new day.' It's about the long term goal not the speed bumps along the way. I am far from finished in life and still have many more goals and dreams. I would encourage all to keep that spirit of adventure, keep your eye on the future and to Boldly Go!"

Editor's Note: This article has been edited down for format purposes.

National Student Advocacy Conference 2023

Victor Valley College's Associated Student Body recently toured Washington D.C. for their annual National Student Advocacy Conference, hosted by the American Student Association of Community Colleges (ASACC), a national organization that represents the interests and needs of community college students across the United States. ASACC works to promote student engagement and success through leadership development, advocacy, and networking opportunities. The organization also provides resources and support to community college student governments, such as training programs, conferences, and communication tools.

Similar to ASACC, the ASB works to promote student engagement and success through a variety of initiatives, including leadership development, advocacy, and community outreach. The ASB also provides a platform for student voices to be heard and for students to work together to effect positive change on campus. By participating in ASB activities and events, students can develop valuable skills, make connections, and enhance their overall college experience. As a member of ASACC, VVC's ASB has access to additional resources and support, which can further enhance their ability to represent and serve the interests of Victor Valley College students.

This year's trip promoted VVC's achievement as a 3-time "Campus of the Year." This year VVC presented a workshop that featured the unique and effective approach student leaders have in collaborating and working with college administrators and decision makers.





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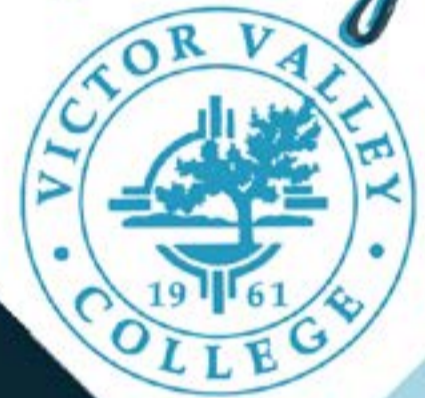
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