

GCF News

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GCC Celebrated 90 Years!

Last year we celebrated GCC's 90th Anniversary. Under a starlit sky, people came together to recognize GCC for providing extraordinary higher education opportunities to our community.

Event co-chairs Ellyn Semler and Mike Haney, along with honorary co-chairs Bhupesh and Kumud Parikh, produced an exciting fundraising dinner with an auction, awards, and entertainment, all held under the stars to showcase and celebrate this magnificent campus and its people.

1. GGC 90th Anniversary Banquet; 2. GCC Student Singers;
3. David Viar with honorees Angie Dickinson, Chuck Bistagne and Chip Stone; 4. Left to right - Jing Johnson, Emelyn Judge, Robert Judge, Kumud & Bhupesh Parikh, Ann Ransford, Catherine Dudley, Kohar Kesian; 5. Mike Haney, Angie Dickinson, Ellyn Semler; 6. Officer Teal Metts, Angie Dickinson; 7. GCC Singers; 8. Seated left to right - Melita Riddle, Stu Riddle, Larry Byrd, Standing - Robert Geller, Sevada Chamras, Elmida Baghdawerians, Lee Parks, Larry Parks, Asmik Oganessian, Ararat Oganessian; 9. Left to right - Mike Haney, Chuck Bistagne, Ellyn Semler; 10. Bottom row left to right - Agnes Eguaras (Dean of Instructional Services), Paula Devine (Glendale City Councilmember), Angie Dickinson, Chris Erskine, top row left to right - Paul Rickey, Rita Zobayan, Lisa, J.P. Wammack, Nancy Wammack, Dr. David Viar (GCC Superintendent/President)

Masiela Lusha

Not Just an Actress

MELODY SHAHSAVARANI

Editor-in-Chief, El Vaquero Newspaper
 Glendale Community College

For Masiela Lusha the road to success began in Albania, led to Glendale Community College, then onto an award-winning writer and actress, to a global humanitarian.

With a total of eight published works, honing four languages, and an ambassador for Prince Harry's charity, Lusha keeps busy. From her big break on "George Lopez," she recently filmed a Lifetime movie "Forgotten Evil" and just wrapped her second "Sharknado."

It may seem like a lot to keep track of, but it all makes sense to Lusha, just like her outlook on "Sharknado," a fan favorite that also has endured jokes.

"That's the beauty of Sharknado, produced and directed in a way that's serious, but doesn't take itself seriously," Lusha told El Vaquero during a recent visit to campus. "When people make fun of it, that's the byproduct we embrace. It's a weird dichotomy."

It's this diverse experience that makes Lusha stand out as a GCC alumna, said Lisa Brooks, executive director of the Glendale College Foundation, an organization that works to support facilities and programs.

"I was impressed by this young woman by all her accomplishments not just as an actress but as a poet and humanitarian," Brooks said. "We contact alumni who have gone on and done wonderful things in the world, and Masiela was one of those people."

Lusha migrated to the states as an Albanian refugee at the age of 7, coming to Michigan via Hungary and Austria. She was sponsored in the United States by her great uncle.

One of her earliest memories is of the bus ride out of Albania, where the government at the time was under communist rule. While riding with her mother to Budapest for freedom, she noticed the American Red Cross volunteers who had been informed of a possible bomb on the bus, and vowed to protect everyone.

"To sense that ability of completely unique culture, and expectations and people who you've never and don't look like you, who put themselves on the line for you, because of a human cause that's overarching any culture,



Photo by Ken Allard, Editor-in-Chief, El Vaquero Newspaper

Glendale College alumna Masiela Lusha, actress poet and humanitarian, outside the San Gabriel building after an interview with El Vaquero. Lusha is best known for her role as Carmen on "George Lopez."

that defines you," Lusha said.

She credits her long journey from Albania, with stops in Budapest and Vienna, as her roadmap for both her humanitarian and creative work.

"I have been helped in so many ways," Lusha said. "I'm not going to do a project that implodes society, or produce a piece of writing that will impact in a negative way. I think I've been given too much, and am always striving to make up for it."

She moved to California and at age 15 enrolled in Glendale College, later transferring to UCLA, majoring in creative writing.

"GCC has a sense of roots I can hold onto that I didn't have as a kid," Lusha said. "I have to say it did open all the opportunities for me. I was able to go to UCLA, pursue my love for literature."

Recently, she became an Ambassador for Prince Harry's charity, Sentebale. She went to Africa to visit orphans to experience their daily struggles.

"That was life-changing," Lusha said.

As a poet Lusha got an early start, publishing two books before graduating from high school. She has been awarded as one of the top ten talented poets of North America and received public recognition from former President Bill Clinton.

Poetry became her universal outlet for her feelings and experiences. Her mother recited literature as bedtime stories, and with a celebrated Albanian poet as an aunt, "I feel that was the fabric of my existence before I even spoke my first word," Lusha said.

At 12 years old she dedicated her first poetry book to her seventh grade English teacher,

who encouraged Lusha to embrace the English language and to recite the poetry in front of the class.

"I was mortified, but when I tried it, the embrace I received from the class transformed my trajectory as a poet," Lusha said. "That was the moment I thought this might be good, and it was the only validation I needed."

She pursued theater at a young age in Michigan, but never thought beyond those amateur roles. Then one day a talent agent searching the Midwest for new faces came across a young Lusha. After searching from 600 hopefuls, Lusha and three other girls were on their way to Los Angeles. She never looked back.

The day of her audition for "George Lopez," Lusha fell ill and her mother contemplated if she should attend. With no hesitation Lusha persisted, went through the audition, and received a callback.

"It was the first time ever I auditioned for a sitcom," she said. "It was different because people would laugh in the middle of my lines, but yet I felt intuitive. And it felt this was the right thing. I didn't know how I sensed it, but I knew this was the direction I needed to go."

After getting the life changing role of Carmen Lopez on the syndicated series, the writers crafted her character towards Lusha's real-life personality and passions. Carmen became a poet on the show and certain love interests reflected on her own life. "We were the original autobiographical sitcom," she said.

The actress has recently wrapped another Sharknado, portraying Gemini, the cousin of Fin Shepard (Ian Ziering) and niece of Gilbert Grayson Shepard (David Hasselhoff).

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Masiela Lusha *continued*

Stepping away from the film’s outrageous concept Lusha describes the dynamic of family and dedication on set.

“What compelled me to accept this, is that it’s a family unit and does elevate society in a way that encourages certain dynamics within family,” Lusha said.

Lusha currently stars in the international Lifetime film “Forgotten Evil,” a psychological

thriller written, directed, and produced by Anthony C. Ferrante from the “Sharknado” franchise. She plays a woman who awakes with amnesia.

From the struggles of fleeing her homeland to accomplishing the wildest dreams, she recollected about her second home, GCC.

Lusha embodies the advice she tends to always give about the college.

“Embrace every single opportunity you have here, there are so many prospects here,” she said. “GCC gives you the advice ‘you can do it.’” ●

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Completing the Circle

A Little Help Along the Way

The year was 1967 and 20-year-old Paul Dickinson was just beginning to make something of himself. He hadn’t been a great student in high school, and after a difficult start, considered giving up on college. But in the interest of not disappointing his father he decided to stick it out.

Paul credits some of the great instructors he met at Glendale College with providing the inspiration he needed to find his footing. He credits one professor in particular who changed his attitude toward learning with inspirational lectures in art history. “Dr. Leonard DeGrassi was the inspiration that changed the course of the rest of my life,” said Dickinson.

He was a first-generation college student; both his father and grandfather had been linemen for the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power. Although that provided their family with a measure of stability, Paul’s father believed that a college education would be necessary for his son if he wanted to achieve a better life. “It seemed like he was nagging at the time,” Paul remembered, “but he turned out to be so right. I look back on my two years at Glendale College as the turning point in my adult life.”

By the end of his sophomore year at GCC, Paul had earned a 3.9 grade point average and was preparing to transfer to USC—all while working 20–25 hours a week to save money for college. And that’s when even more help arrived, in the form of a \$2,000 scholarship awarded by the ladies of the Oakmont League.

“That was a good amount of money back then, and it helped me with expenses at USC,” said Paul. “It was also a great honor.”

Having found the encouragement he needed to succeed at Glendale College, Paul was able to sustain his performance at USC. He earned a bachelor’s degree in international relations in 1969, then completed a master’s program in public administration. “After graduation, I was fortunate to be offered a job with the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission working on an underground nuclear test program,” he said.

For more than 37 years he worked as an administrator in the defense and environmental fields, and in 2008 Paul and his wife Barbara retired and moved to Bend, Oregon. “Just a few months before we were going to move, my wife’s son passed away at the age of 38,” Paul recalled. “He had attended Cal State Chico and had established a scholarship there in memory of his father. When Barbara and I looked into it, we were very impressed with the program he was supporting, so we decided that his share of any family inheritance would go to the university to help expand his scholarship fund.”



L to R: Professor Leonard DeGrassi, Paul Dickinson

“Then my wife said to me, ‘You’re always talking about what Glendale College did for you.’ I got to thinking about it and told her, ‘You know, you’re right,’” Paul explained, “so we decided to do something like that for Glendale.”

The Dickinsons have written Glendale College into their trust. “Once both of us are gone, the trust will divide up the family’s assets, and we specified that \$200,000 will go to the college to be used for scholarships,” Paul said.

“I got a lot of help from USC—not financially, but in just about every other way—but it’s at the community college level that this type of support is needed,” he continued. “I know what I went through and how difficult it would have been if I hadn’t gotten that scholarship from the Oakmont League, so I want our money to go to Glendale College and support kids who are trying to be the first in their families to go to college, like I did.” ●

Glendale Couple is Living Their Legacy

Arthur and Paula Devine are living their very own legacy right here in Glendale



Arthur and Paula Devine

Long-time Glendale residents and public servants, Art and Paula committed themselves to supporting education many years ago.

Paula was deeply moved when she visited a GCC classroom many years ago while serving as a guest lecturer in the Women's Studies Program. At that time she was also serving on the Glendale Commission on the Status of Women. Expanding her love of education following her retirement, Paula taught a class in the GCC Physical Education Program.

"With a background in education, Paula has always supported education programs for Glendale's youth," said Arthur. "We truly believe that there is no better place to invest than in our own community. GCC and GUSD are the best there is when it comes to local schools."

Paula remains active in public service as the current mayor of the City of Glendale. "We are proud that GCC is a growing, thriving institution providing our youth with a strong community college education," she said. "We are committed to doing our best to ensure that this continues and that our community members have the opportunity to receive an excellent education."

The Devines are members of the GCC Legacy Society, having named the Glendale College Foundation in their Trust, and will continue to

support GCC in the future through their financial investment. While there are many ways to leave a legacy to the Foundation, Art and Paula chose to write their own and work through their attorney to incorporate it into their Trust.

When asked to share information with others who might be interested in joining them in the GCC Legacy Society, Arthur stated, "there is no better or wiser investment in the future of our city, state and country than the support we are able to give to our schools. These young people are our greatest assets and we must do what we can to ensure that they have the opportunity to become productive and successful citizens. What better gift is there than to know that your legacy will perpetuate the education and development of those who follow us?" ●

COMING THIS SPRING!



Unveiling our tribute to the **LEGACY SOCIETY** and those who have taken the steps to **FUND THE FUTURE** of Glendale Community College.

foundation
 GLENDALE COLLEGE FOUNDATION, INC.

For information, contact Lisa Brooks at lbrooks@glendale.edu