Sculpture garden honors college board member

Chuck Clemans was a man of many interests and passions. Some of the interests he cared most deeply about are part of the landscape now at Clackamas Community College in the Chuck Clemans Memorial Sculpture Garden.

Friends and supporters of Clemans and the college gathered late last month to celebrate completion of the first phase of the sculpture garden. Clemans, a longtime CCC board member and citizen activist, died in December 2011. The sculpture garden honors Clemans’ memory and his commitment to the arts.

After more than a year’s planning, the garden, near the college’s Art Center, is dotted with life-size outdoor sculptures. Some sculptures were donated from the personal collection of Clemans and his wife, Nancy Hungerford. Other pieces were purchased through the Clemans Campus Art Endowment, established to provide funds for art work at CCC. Three sculptures were part of the college collection and have been moved to the garden. The garden has been carefully designed and landscaped to highlight the artwork.

Hungerford spoke at the garden’s opening celebration on June 27 and shared that the garden represents many of Clemans closest held values: the garden, community college and the promise education provides, and his love for CCC, its staff and students.

“Chuck knew that nothing is more lasting than art,” she said. “In this place, I feel his legacy and his presence.”

Clemans served as the superintendent of the Oregon City School District before joining the the CCC Foundation board and the CCC Board of Education in 2001. He played a key role in influencing policy through the Oregon Community College Association in Salem. He took a leadership role in CCC’s 2000 bond election, which funded six new buildings at CCC’s Oregon City campus and spearheaded the CCC Foundation campaign that raised $3 million to complete the buildings and support programming.

“Chuck’s fingerprints are everywhere, in every corner of our campus,” said President Joanne Truesdell.

Clemans also supported emerging local artists. One of those artists, Ben Dye, whose work is included in the sculpture garden, spoke at the celebration. Dye met Clemans at an art show when he was feeling discouraged, but the support he received from Clemans renewed his dedication to art.

“Chuck did not make me a better artist, but knowing Chuck made me a better person who makes art,” Dye said.

Nearly $70,000 has been invested in the garden so far including gifts, art and in-kind donations. The CCC Foundation is now accepting gifts to build an endowment that will fund long-term care of the Clemans Memorial Sculpture Garden including public seating, landscaping and additional outdoor sculptures. To contribute to the endowment, contact the CCC Foundation at 503-594-3131.

The sculpture garden is in the wooded area between Randall Hall and the Art Center. It is open to the public. For more information, call Vicki Smith, 503-594-3128.