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Vanguard celebrates anniversary

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Classes have changed but core mission unchanged after 40 years

FREMONT -- Vanguard Career Center had a 40th Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, featuring a community-wide open house and ice cream social. Present staff and students, their families, and alumni spent the afternoon looking back on the school's last 40 years.

Attendees were taken on tours of the school and treated to free hot dogs, juice and ice cream. Children enjoyed free games and activities, including cornhole, hula hoops, face painting and balloon animals created by a clown.

A continuously running power point presentation showed a photographic history of the school. The presentation featured photos of former staff, administrators, board of education members, superintendents, and current staff and retirees.

A bake sale was held during the event to raise funds to send chef and restaurant student Zachery Holbrook to Sullivan College Culinary Camp.

"The camp will teach an overview of what I'll learn in the college program, like knife skills and different soups," Sullivan said.

Vanguard Director James Rutter said everyone was enjoying a lot of good memories. "Monte Huss was here. He was Fremont police chief for many years," he said. "He was in the first period of the first class I ever taught."

While Vanguard has upgraded its programs to stay in step with modern technology, overall things at the school have stayed the same during the last forty years.

For instance, the mission that the school was founded upon has not changed.

"Vanguard, through its 40 years, has not altered from the goal of providing quality career education for area students," said John Rizzardi, an instructor at the school. "Structuring classes that provide both an excellent academic base and hands-on career skills remains a characteristic of a Vanguard Career Center education."

Bryan Moreland said it is that type of consistency at the school that has made it so successful. Moreland is a 1994 Vanguard graduate, and is now an electrical trades program instructor at the school. He said that changing technology has caused some big changes at the school, but "overall things here stayed the same, which is really good for the students."

Uniformity throughout the years has provided what he called a common thread that has been

beneficial to the students. He said, "We have a great administrative staff here. None of this would be possible without them."

It's not just the school that's stayed the same, said Crystal Webel, senior cosmetology instructor and 1976 Vanguard graduate. "Overall, the students are still the same."

So what has changed at the school?

The way some of the programs are run, for one thing. "When I was a student, and even when I first started teaching, the cosmetology program was a 1500 hour program. It's a competency-based program now," Webel said.

As an hourly program, students were docked hours they missed. Now, if a student misses a particular lesson, they can make it up another day. That gives them the flexibility to finish the program sooner and more conveniently. This year's students will be testing for their cosmetology licenses before graduation ceremonies. "They'll have a profession license in hand when they graduate," she said.

Teaching styles have become more personal over the years.

"Interaction between program teachers and students is more common now," Rizzardi said. And of course, technological advances have brought the biggest changes.

"Sometimes it seems like the equipment we started with was equivalent to a chisel and stone tablet when compared to today's Vanguard lab apparatus," Rizzardi said. "An auto tech student is no longer listening to an engine to figure out what is wrong. He is plugging into a complex diagnostic system that gives an instant read out."

He said that other advances include robotics equipment in the welding program and Microsoft certification in the business software and technology program.

"Another change is the ability of Vanguard programs to offer college credit to Vanguard students while attending the Career Center," he said. "This has encouraged Vanguard students to continue their education in a much broader scope of colleges and technical colleges than prior students did."



A clown was on hand at the open house to make made-to-order balloon animals and hats.



Free hot dogs, juice and ice cream were given away at Vanguard's 40th Anniversary Celebration. (Photos by Sheri Trusty | News-Messenger correspondent)