

Investing in the Future of Education

For the Love of Sport, the Environment, and the JC...

One of SRJC's Biggest Fans Tells Why Our Greatest Assets Are Our Kids



For more than a decade, Terry Sthymmel has been a loyal contributor to SRJC. He established a special endowment fund in his mother's name and is a committed supporter of the College's athletic programs for women, as well as SRJC's agriculture program. The following interview with Mr. Sthymmel focuses on his relationship with the SRJC over the years:

Foundation News: What type of an endowment did you establish at SRJC?

Mr. Sthymmel: When my mother passed away I wanted to do something as a memorial to her and to benefit women's soccer. We established the Betty Jane Sthymmel Endowment Fund in 2006 that provides a \$1,000 scholarship annually for two young women in the soccer program planning to attend a four year college. My mother was an exceptional woman who grew up through tough times, without parents, while putting herself through school. Both she and my dad became real estate brokers and together they shared an abiding interest in the value of education and instilling a strong work ethic in my brother, Randy, and me.

Foundation News: What impresses you the most about SRJC? Is it just the soccer program?

Mr. Sthymmel: I've been a resident of Sonoma County for 30 years and live on a five-acre parcel of land in Penngrove near the SRJC Petaluma Campus where I raise Christmas trees and sheep. My passion for the land also includes a love of roses and gardening. I get excited and fired up just thinking about SRJC. My other great interest in life is growing things. I'm an outdoor person who loves to work the land. That is why agriculture education is of equal importance to me.

Foundation News: Tell us about your own educational background.

Mr. Sthymmel: I always wanted to become a biologist. I received an undergraduate bachelor of science degree in biology from the University of Nevada at Reno and attended UC Berkeley graduate school classes that would have led to an advanced degree in marine biology. After college, I worked with the Peace Corps fisheries program in the Philippines from 1972 to 1975 before returning to the states to become a professional painting contractor. I have earned a living as a painter since I was 15 when my dad said to me, "Son, school is great, but you need to learn to work with your hands." Years earlier he had worked in a Sausalito shipyard and knew from experience the value of having a trade.

Foundation News: Why have you become involved in supporting various SRJC programs at all levels?

Mr. Sthymmel: People often call me to assist with fundraising projects. Over the years I've supported Future Farmers of America, 4H Clubs, and the agriculture programs at Elsie Allen and Piner High Schools. I have also worked with football coaches and others involved in intramural sports at the college level. I'm an avid reader who follows the progress and achievements of SRJC athletes. My niece was active in both baseball and track, so I guess it was only natural that I would become involved locally in helping to fund SRJC's sports and agriculture programs.

Foundation News: Why is the SRJC women's soccer program special to you?

Mr. Sthymmel: Unlike many institutions of higher learning, SRJC coaches recruit local student athletes. I was particularly impressed with the work of SRJC's former P.E. Instructor and Women's Soccer Coach, Karen Stanley, who should be honored in the hall of fame, in my opinion. Her dedication and hard work, and that of other coaches, have brought SRJC to Division One status, both in women's soccer, as well as basketball. I also admire our baseball coaching staff for being number one in the nation. Coaches from other institutions of higher learning, such as Sonoma State University, admire our athletic programs, especially our facilities, and bring their teams to use SRJC's all-weather fields.

Foundation News: How would you describe your philosophy of giving?

Mr. Sthymmel: Our greatest assets are our kids. For me, it's all about giving back. I love being active in the community and in helping people. I also love to make things happen by working quietly behind the scenes with those in leadership positions to give students the financial resources they need to get ahead and improve themselves. Few schools have the world-class facilities that we have here at SRJC, with two large campuses serving more than 35,000 students, and state-of-the-art buildings like the Frank P. Doyle Library and the new Lawrence A. Bertolini Student Center. I'm very proud of our college, and although I am a confirmed bachelor, I consider myself to be a "lifelong uncle" of students who excel at sports, as well as those who want to become agriculturists.