



Cindy Stocking practices her nursing skills on a mock patient.

PERSONAL ENRICHMENT

# New beginnings

Local community colleges provide a wealth of opportunity.

BY ERIN MARSHALL

*In the middle of her career, Cindy needed a change and a challenge. At the crossroads of high school graduation, Mahta was faced with self-doubt and little money. Both found new beginnings in their neighborhood community college.*

Anyone in Orange County who has received care from a nurse has probably met a Saddleback College graduate. Soon **Cindy Stocking** will be joining their ranks. After nearly 20 years as a respiratory therapist, she decided to return to school to pursue a nursing degree. "Saddleback College is a great school," says an enthusiastic Stocking. "The faculty motivates you to learn and work hard and the nursing program's reputation is outstanding."

Stocking will be one of 47 nursing students who will graduate with an Associate Degree in Nursing in December. She takes great pride in the nursing program and her dedication, which shows in her 4.0 grade average. She balances her work as a respiratory

therapist with school and her role as wife and mother. Her 19 year-old daughter, Jennifer, is a sophomore at Irvine Valley College and 7 year-old Jessica is in second grade. Stocking says organization is vital, along with knowing when to take a break to spend time with her family.

Stocking hopes to eventually earn her Master's degree. "My time at Saddleback College has been a great experience. It gives me the desire to go forward with my career and my education."

The Associate Degree Nursing program consistently produces graduates who exceed stringent requirements. The program had a 96% pass rate on the State Licensing Exam this year, far above national and state averages. Saddleback College is the only program in California

to pioneer the TeleEd classroom connecting the campus to local hospital classrooms, including pre-requisite courses at Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian, University of California-Irvine Medical Center and Saddleback Memorial. Nursing graduates have excellent job prospects, given Orange County's nursing shortage.

In addition to nursing, the Saddleback College health sciences division provides training for careers as paramedics, emergency medical technicians, medical assistants, phlebotomists/laboratory assistants, and American Sign Language interpreters.

*Like many high school graduates, Mahta had her doubts when it came time to graduate. Her grades were not good enough to get into a four-year university. She also lacked the money for college. Thanks to a suggestion from her high school counselor, she enrolled at Irvine Valley College (IVC) and is now a successful psychology major.*

Most students, like **Mahta Rezaian**, face financial obstacles in obtaining a higher education. Even though the cost of a community college is low, staff at IVC helped Rezaian obtain financial assistance and find a job through the student work study program. Now she could focus on succeeding as a student instead of worrying about where the money would come from.

Rezaian's goal is to be a psychologist. Her personal focus is people-oriented and compassionate and she feels like everyone at IVC has that focus, too.

"It will be hard to leave IVC, but I plan to transfer to the University of California, Irvine or the University of California, Berkeley. With a GPA of 3.9, I'm doing better than I ever expected to do in college," comments Rezaian. "I am happy with my decision to attend Irvine Valley College. Schools that wouldn't consider my application when I graduated from high school are now encouraging me to apply."

Rezaian is a member of the honors program and volunteers as a peer mentor visiting local high schools to share her experience. Another program Rezaian credits is available through the IVC Transfer Center. Counselors guide students through the process of transferring to four-year institutions.



"They have kept me right on track with my educational goals."

Rezaian says, "You take a little from the community and



*Mahta's uncertain future is now one bright with possibilities.*

hopefully will end up giving a lot back. I truly want to hold that ideal through the course of my life. That is why I want to teach psychology at a local community college. I have a

long road ahead of me, but maybe, one day, I'll be fortunate enough to be back at Irvine Valley College teaching psychology."

Saddleback College in Mission Viejo and Irvine Valley College in Irvine are both part of the South Orange County Community College District. Together they prepare over 38,000 students for careers, lifelong learning, and transfer to four-year colleges and universities. The colleges can help students with financial assistance, career counseling, on campus child care, distance learning programs, and much more.

Information about Saddleback College can be found at [www.saddleback.edu](http://www.saddleback.edu) or by calling 949-582-4500.

Information about Irvine Valley College can be found at [www.ivc.edu](http://www.ivc.edu) or by calling 949-451-5100. **tw**