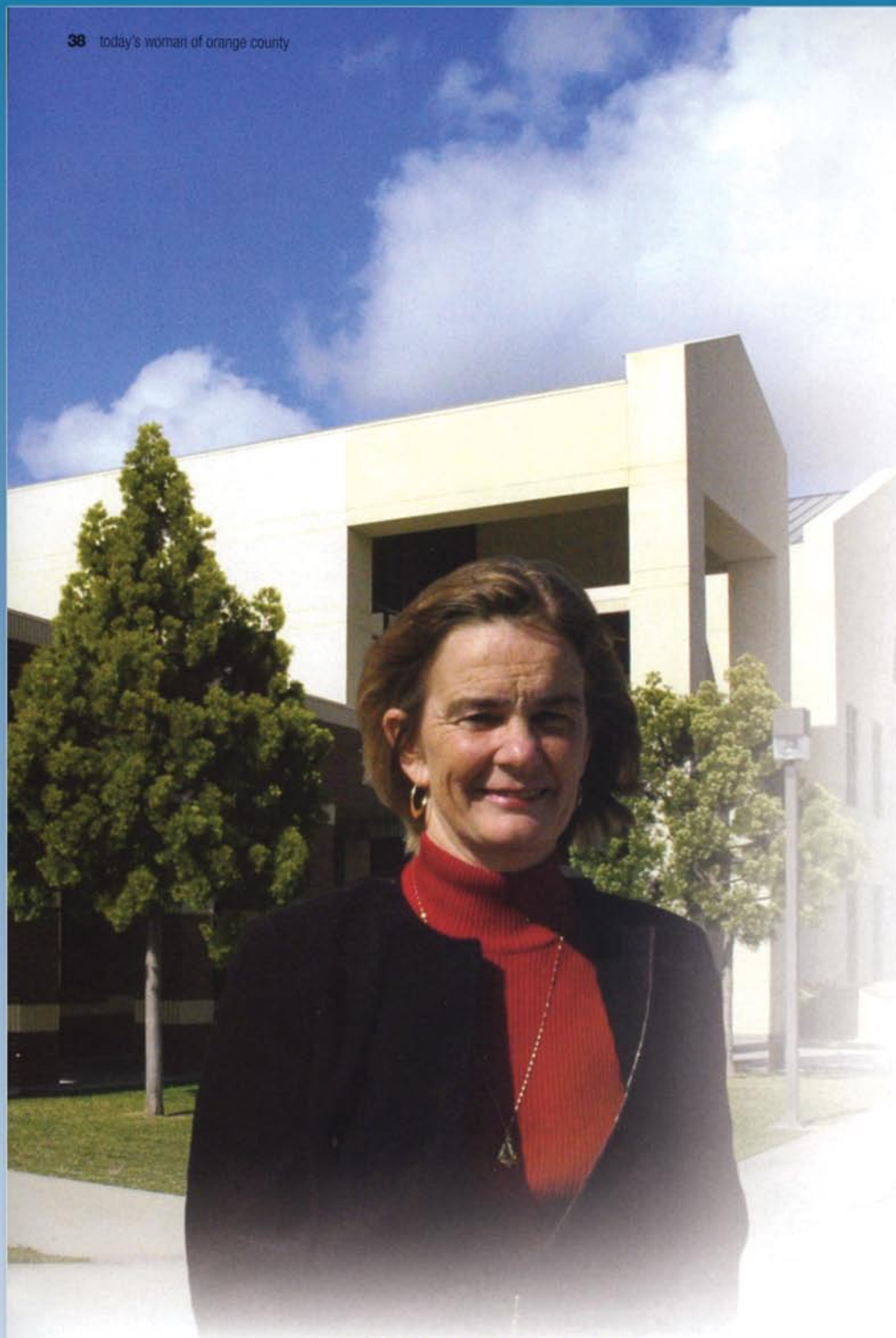


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EDUCATION

Teachers who inspired us

And helped us reach for the stars.

BY KORI LEE GARNER

Many of us have had (or wish we did!) at least one teacher who inspired us to strive, excel, push harder and reach for our highest goals. Dorothy Sherling, a mathematics professor and Director of the Honors Program at Irvine Valley College, is one of these shining examples of the teaching profession. Voted by her students and colleagues as Irvine Valley's best teacher in 2005, she was named Professor of the Year "for her belief that students can achieve higher academic goals than they could have imagined for themselves, and for making math 'understandable.'"

In 2003, Dr. Sherling, an Irvine resident with more than 20 years' experience teaching college mathematics, created and then became director of the college Honors Program that offers motivated students the opportunity to take academically rigorous coursework in many disciplines. (Dr. Sherling also championed the creation of a comfortable, inviting Honors study center equipped with state-of-the-art computers that is a favorite gathering place for growing numbers of Honors program participants.)

While maintaining a busy teaching schedule, Dr. Sherling juggles the day-to-day operations of the Honors program office while helping to ensure that IVC's Honors curriculum integrates successfully with transfer programs at universities like UCI and UCLA. A long-time member of the IVC Academic Senate, she is the recipient of numerous awards and grants.

"My experience has been that students enjoy a challenge. Our Honors Program is designed to capitalize on the intellectual curiosity they bring with them when they arrive on campus. However, we design courses that are on par with anything they'd get at a four-year school so they're prepared when they get there," says Sherling and adds, "Facing a challenge builds self-esteem in students who may not have the maturity or experience at this point to have much confidence."

For instance, Honors student Li-Li Hu signed up for analytic geometry and calculus from Dr. Sherling. She had taken a previous class from her and wanted to be challenged again. "The quizzes and tests are never easy," remembers Hu. "She (Dr. Sherling) spends two or three hours outside of class teaching students math and finding interesting math problems for students to solve. Although her classes are demanding and require hard work, she is so cheerful and

(Continued)



"Teachers Who Inspired Us"

Dorothy Sherling – continued



spiritual that you can't help but love her and the subject she teaches."

History major Navid Nakhaee, who started taking classes at Irvine Valley when he was still in high school, adds, "Since starting at IVC, I feel that I am on top of my schooling for the first time in my life. Academics weren't my priority in high school. Being a part of the Honors Program at IVC and working with Professor Sherling provides an environment for me to enrich myself intellectually."

Paul Ho, former U.S. Army medic and student representa-

tive to the South Orange County Community College District Board of Trustees in 2005-2006, decided to stay and complete his associate degree at Irvine Valley College while taking his first Honors math class with Dr. Sherling. "She was so intellectually stimulating, caring and compassionate," says Ho. "Dr. Sherling is typical of the Honors faculty who push students to the limit so they can excel at a level that they themselves did not expect to reach."

"The Honors Program is a tremendous inspiration for me," says Dr. Sherling. "Our students'

lives are significantly changed in a positive way. Our faculty pour their energies into this program and reap the rewards of seeing students' intellectual curiosity, creativity and leadership skills both challenged and rewarded."

This extraordinary teacher sums up her philosophy of education. "Students have the opportunity to experience a typical education or an exceptional one. I feel very passionately that students can be encouraged (coaxed, pushed, nagged or cajoled, if necessary) to have the exceptional experience. I view my job as that of coaching my students to accept the challenge of thinking critically and creatively. The reward of seeing, or having any part in helping a student change from being one with ability, but with little self-assurance, to a transferring graduate with confidence and the knowledge that he or she can and will achieve a life-goal, is the educa-

tional goal toward which I strive."

Not content with constantly challenging her students to aim higher academically, Dr. Sherling leads by example. Even in her private life she walks the talk. For fun, she and her family have raced sailboats for many years, recently sailing their 44-foot boat across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe. In 2003, they sailed north of the Arctic Circle to the Lofoten Islands of Norway. As she is constantly admonishing her Honors students to do, Dorothy Sherling tries to seize every opportunity! **tw**

The Irvine Valley College Honors Program welcomes inquiries from academically talented and highly motivated students. For more information on the Honors Program or the Program Director, Dr. Sherling, please call 949.451.5300 or email honorsprogram@ivc.edu. For more information on this article, please contact the author at kgarner@socc-d.org.