



**CONTRA  
COSTA  
COLLEGE**

# Generational Connections

Spring 2025 | Issue 05



For many years, the scholarships were presented at a dinner cooked by the Culinary Arts students in the cafeteria. Student recipients and their families were served by faculty and staff. Pix is from early 1990s. L to R: Lenore Lundholm, Lavora Mathis, Liliyan Cole, Keith Buescher, Ellen Geringer, Ellen Smith, Rocco Chavez and Bruce Carlton.

## 75 Years of Excellence!

Established in 1949, we proudly began our journey with the first classes in Spring 1950. Here's to honoring our legacy and embracing the future together!

Look up the definition of a public community college. You'll find: an undergraduate educational institution that provides education and training primarily for students from its local community. CCC has been educating and interacting with its community for 75 years. That time period encompasses multiple generations, so it is perhaps unsurprising that there are strong connections between the college and the families of the individuals who have been educated and/or employed at CCC over these many years. We will be highlighting some of their stories as we celebrate this milestone anniversary.

- Ellen Geringer



In this issue:

## The Colbert/Baker Family

Denine Colbert has been at CCC for 27 years, starting out as an hourly worker at the switchboard (remember those?). She is currently the Athletic Equipment Coordinator. Her daughter, Denine Baker, attended Middle College on the CCC campus and earned 3 AA degrees at CCC before transferring to a 4-year university.



# Legacy Talks

Passing the Baton from  
One Generation to the Next

## Did you grow up in the local community?

Denine Colbert (mom)

No, I grew up in Iowa.

Denine Baker (daughter)

Yes.

“

*Instructors are helpful, old school - you can ask or talk to them about anything. It has a warm feeling, like family.*

## Why did you choose to attend/work at CCC?

Denine Colbert (mom)

A friend told me about the switchboard opening. I liked the staff and students, the campus atmosphere, so I applied for a fulltime position when it was available. I did track and softball in high school, so I was pleased when I was able to move into a position in the PE Dept. I also started taking classes but it was hard balancing work and school and kids, so I put it aside for a while and came back to it later. (Got my AA in 2022.)

Denine Baker (daughter)

I'd attended MCHS and was close to getting an AA degree so I stayed. (Ended up earning 3 AA's.) And my mom was here.

## How satisfied were you with your experience at CCC?

Denine Colbert (mom)

Definitely satisfied both as worker and student. It is all about students. Instructors are helpful, old school - you can ask or talk to them about anything. It has a warm feeling, like family.

Denine Baker (daughter)

Really satisfied. I enjoyed the teachers, the campus, culture.

## Was there a college employee who had a significant positive influence on your time at CCC?

Denine Colbert (mom)

John Wade was my mentor after Tom Kinnard retired. (Both were Athletic Director.) I can go talk to Kimberly Roger (our current president) anytime, to say anything, without being judged.

Denine Baker (daughter)

Mr. (Terence) Elliott and Ms. (Carolyn) Hodge. Mr. Elliott was my first ever African American teacher. I respected and looked up to them both.

## What is your most positive CCC memory?

Denine Colbert (mom)

Years ago, I sat and talked with a student who seemed off somehow, something was going on. It turned out she had some overwhelming issues in her life that were making her feel suicidal. I was able to connect her to appropriate people on campus who were able to get her the help she needed. Three years later, she showed up in my office with flowers and thanked me. We still keep in touch.

Denine Baker (daughter)

Being in same classes with college students when I was in MCHS and seeing their reactions. We were kids; we kind of enjoyed getting under their skin. Everyone knew my mom. I liked working with her at the concession stand during basketball games, running little errands for the coaches. I spent lots of time in the library and cafeteria (still my favorite French fries).

## Do you remember seeing any of the famous musicians, artists, speakers who have appeared at the college?

Denine Colbert (mom)

Not really.

Denine Baker (daughter)

No.



## What is something at CCC (not class-related) that you enjoyed being part of?

Denine Colbert (mom)

Everything! I volunteer to help with anything for students, set-up, fundraising, etc. I've especially enjoyed helping with the summer sports camps for 8 – 17-year-olds.

Denine Baker (daughter)

Being part of the Center for Science Excellence. I'm not super great at it but consider myself a nerd. I especially liked astronomy. We had an outing to hike up to an observatory, and once we went on a camping trip up in the mountains. I remember looking up at all the stars and clouds in the night and realizing how small us humans are. (I also discovered I was scared of tarantulas!)



## How did attending CCC prepare you for the “real world” & your career?

Denine Baker (daughter)

Not going to a 4-year university right away allowed me to develop more and prepare for transfer. When I did transfer, it was still too much for me – it was too big, too many people, not as diverse – so I only lasted a year before transferring to a smaller school.

## What did you learn in study program/employment that is most applicable to your current position?

Denine Colbert (mom)

Getting to work with the athletic trainers has taught me a lot; learning about how the body works has helped me evolve.

Denine Baker (daughter)

My BA was in psychology, but I had taken a couple of criminal justice classes when at CCC. They helped me promote into my current job as a correctional counselor.

## What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time at CCC?

Denine Baker (daughter)

I wished I'd taken more courses so I could have graduated MCHS and gotten an AA at the same time. Also wish I'd tried other classes to explore different paths.

## What advice would you give someone thinking of attending/working at CCC?

Denine Colbert (mom)

If it's on your mind, go for it. Don't hold yourself back from trying something. If you don't like it, try something else.

Denine Baker (daughter)

Utilize the college resources – clubs, library, being part of the college community. Use academic counselors to make sure you are aiming in the right direction, but also to explore different directions.

## Professional Sports Players + Coaches

Raiders

**Courtney Anderson**

A's, Cardinals, Padres, Indians

**Dwain Anderson**

Pirates, Cubs

**Dave Arrington**

Harlem Globetrotters & Clowns

**Joe (J.D.) Banks**

Cowboys

**Benny Barnes**

Pirates, Mets, Rangers, Cubs (also coach)

**Gene Clines**

Brewers, SF Giants, Mariners, Astros

**Mike Felder**

Cowboys

**Cornell Green**

Red Sox

**Pumpsie Green**

Twins, Mariners (also coach)

**Jeff Harris**

Olympic Track Winner + Coach

**Eddie Hart**

Patriots, NY Giants

**Lawrence McGrew**

Coach for Patriots, Browns, Broncos, Vikings + NY Giants

**Andre Patterson**

Phillies

**Chris Roberson**

Coach for Houston Comets, Atlanta Dreams, Clemson U + Virginia Cavaliers

**Karleen Shield-Thompson**

Dodgers + Athletics

**Marvin Webb**

Packers + Rams

**Travis Williams**

Raiders

**Rich Zecher**