

Donation to college honours retired mechanic

Feb 15
B6

Special to The Daily Courier

A retired automotive mechanic had all the tools he needed to get the job done, and now the company he worked for is passing his legacy onto others with a new Okanagan College achievement award.

Jacobsen Pontiac Buick has donated \$30,000 to the Okanagan College Foundation to create the Jacobsen Pontiac Buick Lou Simonelli Achievement Award Fund.

"The college has always been a good source of potential technicians," said Ron Jacobsen, pointing to the fund's namesake — Lou Simonelli who worked 35 years with the dealership before retiring in August.

The fund will provide an annual \$1,000 award to deserving mature students enrolled in the Automotive Service Technician (AST) apprenticeship program at the Kelowna campus.

Simonelli enrolled in the College's automotive program back in 1976 when he made the move to learn as much as he could about his passion — cars.

"Education will change your life," said Simonelli, who recently toured the shop on campus. He said the technical education he received — combined with ongoing training — gave

him a fulfilling career that carried him through an industry that has become increasingly complex and innovative.

"This is a very generous award," said Okanagan College Foundation president Steve Tuck.

"Sometimes mature students don't have the same level of support when coming back to school as high school students have. And mature students often have greater needs because they may have acquired families or debt and are not eligible for the same support that high school students get when they graduate."

Jacobsen said mature students often make ideal employees.

"If we can help in any manner, it's all part of the solution."

The Jacobsen Pontiac Buick Lou Simonelli Achievement Award Fund is the largest award for the automotive program. Capital from the fund will be invested as a permanent endowment and the income earned from the fund will be used to provide the award.

Students eligible for the award will be enrolled in first, second or third year of the Automotive Service Technician (AST) apprenticeship program. They'll be selected by their instructors based on overall academic performance and participation.



Photo contributed

John Haller, Lou Simonelli and Ron Jacobsen pose with students and staff at Okanagan College. Jacobsen Pontiac Buick has donated \$30,000 to the Okanagan College Foundation to create the Jacobsen Pontiac Buick Lou Simonelli Achievement Award Fund. Simonelli worked 35 years at the dealership before retiring in August 2009.