

# News Release

South Seattle Community College

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 18, 2010

## **LPN Students Celebrate Graduation**

*Pinning ceremony marks completion of first of new courses created for the unemployed and low-income.*

Tuesday, June 22, 2010

5:00 pm, Jerry Brockey Student Center

South Seattle Community College

6000 16th Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98106

Contacts: Dr. Lana Conrad  
South Seattle Community College  
Director of Nursing  
(206) 768-6484, [lconrad@sccd.ctc.edu](mailto:lconrad@sccd.ctc.edu)

Margret Graham  
Workforce Development Council  
Project Manager/Communications  
(206) 448-0474, ext. 3029, [MGraham@seakingwdc.org](mailto:MGraham@seakingwdc.org)

The pinning ceremony, a long-standing tradition to welcome newly-graduated nurses into the profession, is the culmination of South's four-quarter program that prepares students for professional licensure and employment as a Licensed Practical Nurse. Among the 51 graduates this year is the first group of 22 students funded by a grant from the Workforce Development Council (WDC) of Seattle-King County. Marléna Sessions, WDC chief executive officer, will be among those attending the ceremony to congratulate the students.

South is one of seven area community and technical colleges to benefit from cohorts (a series of classes for a single group of students) purchased by the WDC in 2009. This new model, funded by the Recovery Act (stimulus), meets a critical need in the community to expand training for in-demand occupations. There are students eager to enter these professions, and employers who are eager to hire, but not enough classes available. LPN employment, for example, is expected to grow by 21 percent between 2008 and 2018, but classes are expensive for colleges to offer, waiting lists are long, and tuition too costly for many students.

Said Director of Nursing Lana Conrad, "Grants such as this are the answer to bolster colleges' financial need to be able educate more nurses and open the doors for students who may never otherwise be able to enter nursing programs."

New graduate Ronald Cabuag is one of those students who was struggling to get into an LPN program until he was accepted into the WDC cohort. Now, from “just barely making it,” he will earn \$20 or more an hour as an LPN.

“This is pretty much a dream come true. It changed my life, and I mean that from my heart.”

The WDC contracted with South Seattle Community College to cover the instructor’s costs for the nine-month program and worked closely with the college to shape the curriculum. Students in the inaugural LPN cohort not only received financial assistance that covered tuition, books, lab kits, scrubs, and shoes, but other support services including tutoring, career counseling, and in some cases, transportation passes and/or food stamps. Each student also had a WDC-funded advocate in the form of a WorkSource case manager who was with them emotionally every step of the way.

For 31-year old former barista A.J. Bergeron, the grant funding enabled her to afford the program, but the support from her case manager helped her complete it.

“Basically, he was an all-around resource for me to lean on to get through the program,” she explained. “All of the case managers want you to succeed, and they worked really hard to help you get through.”

“South Seattle and our other partner colleges have worked closely with us and with WorkSource to make this new model a great success,” said Marléna Sessions, CEO of the WDC. “This represents a true innovative partnership that has a profound impact on the community by training more than 200 people for new, sustainable jobs.”

Although they represent diverse backgrounds and circumstances, Bergeron feels there was a special bond that united South’s LPN cohort students. She noted that even though the entire class faced challenges, the cohort students especially needed the WDC grant to pursue their dreams of becoming health professionals.

“Honestly, I think we feel the most thankful to be getting through the program because there was no way we could have even been here without the cohort.”

### **About the Workforce Development Council**

The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC) is a nonprofit workforce “think tank” and grant-making organization whose mission is to support a strong economy and ensure the ability of each person to achieve self-sufficiency. Established in 2000 by the King County Executive and the Mayor of Seattle, the WDC is led by a board of directors with a private-sector majority. The WDC oversees a wide range of employment-related programs and initiatives, including WorkSource Seattle-King County ([www.worksourceskc.org](http://www.worksourceskc.org)), serving thousands of King County youth, adults and businesses each year.

### **About South Seattle Community College**

South Seattle Community College serves a multicultural population of 15,000 students each year from an 87-acre, wooded campus in West Seattle, and satellite campuses in the Georgetown and Beacon Hill communities. Its programs include college transfer, professional/technical careers, distance learning, basic and transitional studies, and lifelong learning. The college also offers a four-year Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree in Hospitality Management.

In 2009, South’s LPN program graduates achieved a 100% pass rate on the NCLEX-PN licensure exam.

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Media Inquiries:

(206) 768-6873 / [coehler@sccd.ctc.edu](mailto:coehler@sccd.ctc.edu)



**A.J. Bergeron**



**Ronald Cabuag**