

► FALL 2025



# NEWSLETTER



## ***THE NEW PERFORMING ARTS CENTER IS OPEN!***

**ALSO INSIDE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ALUMNUS SPOTLIGHT** Stephen Prutsman

**FACULTY SPOTLIGHT** Dr. Diane Pfahler

**UPCOMING EVENT** Three Peaks Challenge Service Day



# STEPHEN PRUTSMAN NAMED CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE 2025 OUTSTANDING ALUMNUS



In 1981, a young undergraduate with big questions slipped into the Crafton Hills College library on Tuesday nights, sometimes to study, occasionally to steal a power nap before heading home from work. That student was Stephen Prutsmán, now an internationally celebrated pianist and composer and Crafton's 2025 Outstanding Alumnus.

"What first drew me to Crafton was simply the convenience and that it was so inexpensive," Stephen says. That access mattered. He was taking general education courses, figuring out his next step. "It bought me some time to figure out what direction was right for me. And of course, saved on two years of tuition and allowed me to go to UCLA afterwards." After attending UCLA, Stephen continued his training at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University, where he earned both a master's degree and an Artist Diploma.

Like so many Roadrunners, Stephen can point to a single moment with a professor that changed everything. "One English teacher I remember (but whose name escapes me) was so helpful, I really didn't know how to write a paper at that time and she guided and mentored me through the process. So amazing." That early encouragement, plus a campus that fit his life, built momentum he carried forward.

And forward he went. After Crafton, Stephen continued his studies and launched a career that doesn't fit in just one lane.

Critics call him "beyond boundaries" for good reason: he moves fluently between classical, jazz, and world music, performing as a soloist, composing, arranging, and conducting. He's a medal winner at both the Tchaikovsky and Queen Elisabeth International Piano Competitions and a recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, hallmarks of a world-class career.

His creative footprint is wide. Stephen has served as an Artistic Partner with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, led South America's largest classical music festival as Artistic Director of the Cartagena International Festival of Music, and collaborated with artists ranging from the Kronos Quartet and Yo-Yo Ma to Dawn Upshaw. He's written dozens of arrangements and compositions for leading ensembles, premiered works at Carnegie Hall and major venues across Europe, and recorded everything from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier to a solo jazz album.

In addition to those artistic posts, Stephen now wears two big professional hats: he serves on the Stanford University faculty and works as a music producer with Phenotypic Recordings. These roles follow his two-year appointment as a Visiting Artist at Stanford and his recent creative leadership at Phenotypic.

Equally important is the way he's used music to bring people together. Stephen produces and curates Azure Concerts, welcoming, sensory-friendly performances tailored for individuals on the autism spectrum and their families, and serves on Bay Area boards that support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. He was also recently named Creative Director for Phenotypic Recordings and began a two-year appointment as a Visiting Artist at Stanford University. At home, family is central to his life and music calling. Stephen and his wife, Sigrid, whom he met at a competition in Brussels in 1992, live in Aptos, California, with their son, AJ, 24, who has profound autism and has made enormous strides in recent years. Their daughter, Eloise, recently graduated from Northwestern University.

For someone whose work now spans continents, Stephen's connection to Crafton has stayed simple and sincere. "It is a wonderful honor," he says of being named Crafton Hills College's 2025 Outstanding Alumnus. "I was fortunate to have had the chance to be a student at Crafton Hills at a time when there would not have been any other institutional option for me. It's nice to return there after more than 40 years since I was a student."

The image of a college library that doubled as a quiet refuge on weeknights fits the arc of Stephen's story: a place that met him where he was, taught him what he needed next, and opened the door to what came after. The world knows him for his artistry. He still credits Crafton for the space and the people, who helped him get moving.

# FROM FREUD TO SPEEDING TICKETS, DR. DIANE PFAHLER MAKES PSYCHOLOGY UNMISSABLY PRACTICAL



Walk into Dr. Diane Pfahler's classroom on day one, and you get her approach fast. Real life comes first, theory follows, and humor keeps everyone awake. She opens by claiming that psychology studies everything you do, think, and feel, then she proves it with irresistible hooks. One favorite example is the late-arrival pop quiz about which color cars are getting the most speeding tickets around town and why that matters. Psychologists do not just theorize. They predict, test, and apply.

"I'm fortunate that I was drawn to a field totally involved in everyday life," Dr. Pfahler said. "When my students leave me, it's the applied aspect I want them to take and use." Concepts matter, but she pushes for the habits underneath. Critical thinking. Analysis. The ability to think abstractly. "That's the foundation."

Dr. Pfahler teaches every course in Crafton Hills College's psychology major. This fall, she is teaching Abnormal Psychology, Introduction to Psychology, Statistics for the Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Research Methods. Over the summer, she wrapped Intro, Stats, and Personal and Social Adjustment. Her classes draw a mix of psychology majors, curious non-majors, students in programs that require psychology such as Developmental Psychology for pre-nursing, and students filling general education requirements for transfer.

Since the room is a blend, she treats the first class like a handshake that has to land. "First impressions are so important," Dr. Pfahler said. She opens with quick examples to spark buy-in, hints that psychology has learning strategies that can raise a grade by ten points if students actually use them, then runs a short group

exercise. Before each team shares, she predicts their decisions and connects the pattern back to Freud from a century ago to show how human behavior still follows familiar lines.

And then there is the sweatshirt. "I promise to be entertaining," she tells her students with a grin. "On the first day, I wear a humorous sweatshirt that reflects my philosophy. Education can be fun, and I intend for us to have some." It is not a one-off bit. She wears a different sweatshirt every single class session.

Under the humor sits a steady conviction that education is necessary, beneficial, and personally, socially, and economically rewarding. She wants students to experience psychology as a toolkit they can carry into treatment settings, business, medicine, classrooms, consulting, and any place where people make decisions.

If you want proof it sticks, follow her around town. "This is a running joke among my friends and colleagues," Dr. Pfahler said. "I rarely go somewhere without being stopped by former students." Recently, a woman who took her class in 2005 recognized her in a store. That student is now a licensed clinical social worker in a health care facility. The next day, at a restaurant, a pre-COVID student said hello. He became a Registered Nurse and told Dr. Pfahler he is surprised how often he uses class concepts to support patient care.

Her first question never changes. Was I any good? The answers and the updates fuel her. "I love when students approach me, both to hear how they're doing and to be reminded I've touched lives." She tells current students the same thing every term. Her hope is that when they get where they are going, they will love their work as much as she loves hers. 38 years in, that still holds.

Back in the classroom, those first-day hooks do more than break the ice. They point to a simple rhythm students can use anywhere. Notice what people do, ask why, test the idea, apply it. "Psychology is everywhere," she said. "If students can see it, they can use it." That is the win she cares about, learning that sticks long after the final exam.



# CRAFTON'S NEW PERFORMING ARTS CENTER IS OPEN



We cut the ribbon on the Finkelstein Performing Arts Center on Friday, Sept. 19, and the place already feels like home. The 24,000-square-foot facility sits above Lot E and includes a 274-seat main theater, a flexible black box, rehearsal and recording spaces, and fully equipped costume and scene shops that mirror real professional environments. Sustainable touches like solar, EV chargers, and drought-tolerant landscaping earned early recognition from the U.S. Green Building Council.

The PAC also honors our roots. The original theater opened in 1978, named for Ruben and Lester Finkelstein, whose land gift helped launch the college. Founding faculty member Cliff Cabanilla built the theater program that shaped generations, and this spring his daughter Shannon directed the final show in the old space, bringing the story full circle.

## CLAIM YOUR SEAT IN THE NEW PAC!

### Seats are still available to sponsor!

By creating an endowed fund, you will support the performing arts programs in perpetuity. Even better, your name (or a name you choose to honor) will be engraved on a seat plaque, serving as a lasting symbol of your support for the performing arts and our students for years to come.

**Seats start at just \$500, and payment plans are available.**

**Ready to take your seat?**

Visit [craftonhills.edu/seat](https://craftonhills.edu/seat) to get started.





## UPCOMING EVENTS

# LEND A HAND: THREE PEAKS CHALLENGE SERVICE DAY



Join us for the Fall 2025 Three Peaks Challenge as we volunteer at the Redlands Family Services Food Drive on Saturday, November 15, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

For the past few years, Crafton Hills College volunteers have sorted and organized 30,000+ pounds of donated food each year. These donations support local individuals and families for months. This fall, we're aiming for 50 volunteers from the Crafton community.

### Who's invited

Alumni, students, employees, family, and friends

### What to wear

Crafton shirts or green and gold

### Photo

We'll take a group photo on site

Come serve with fellow Roadrunners and make a real difference close to home. **RSVP with Judy Cannon at [jcannon@craftonhills.edu](mailto:jcannon@craftonhills.edu).**



# CHEER ON CRAFTON WATER POLO AT HOME

Both the men's and women's water polo programs are making real strides this season, with strong participation and the largest rosters in program history. The women are on pace for one of their most successful seasons, already matching past win totals with plenty of games still to play. The men are trending upward, building momentum toward what could be their best overall performance to date.

It's a great time to cheer them on at home: **Saturday, Oct. 25, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. (mini tournament) and Wednesday, Oct. 29, 2 p.m. (men) and 4 p.m. (women).** [The Oct. 29 games are the final home matches of the season.](#) Don't miss them!

# SUPPORT ONLINE



**October 16, 2025 - 5:30 pm**

## [Field of Dreams Fundraiser](#)

Can't make it to the gala, but still want to support the fundraiser? Not a problem! Gifts can be made from the Foundation webpage at [www.craftonhills.edu/foundation](http://www.craftonhills.edu/foundation).

**Go to the "Give Now" box** on our home page, click "Other", enter "Gala", and then click "Donate" to make your donation!



*Save a Life, Donate Blood!*

**Tuesday, December 2, 2025**

**10:00am - 4:00pm**

## [Join us at the Blood Drive](#)

Crafton Hills College students, staff, and faculty—your donation can make a difference! Join us in giving the gift of life by donating blood. Every drop counts, and your generosity could help someone in need.

Let's come together and make an impact!

Make your appt today: <https://www.lstream.org/yucaipa/>.

**See all of Crafton's upcoming events at [craftonhills.edu/calendar](http://craftonhills.edu/calendar)**

## CAMPUS UPDATE

# CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE RENAMES CRAFTON HALL AFTER LONGTIME VOLUNTEER AND DONOR BARBARA L. SMITH

During a special Preview Party and Naming Ceremony on September 12 held at Crafton Hills College, the Yucaipa-based college officially renamed the building formerly known as Crafton Hall in honor of Smith, a longtime volunteer, donor, and friend of the college.

While the building has undergone major renovations, Smith's gift was not tied to the remodel. Instead, her donation is an **unrestricted investment to support students**, providing vital resources to help them overcome unexpected challenges on their academic journey.

"We're so grateful for Barbi's decision to make this gift," said Crafton President Dr. Kevin Horan. "It is an investment that enables us as a college to meet students where they are. It creates an unrestricted endowment to meet student needs when they face obstacles they can't anticipate."

Smith, a former Crafton student herself, attended the college during its early years. At the ceremony, her longtime friend Christopher Palmer fondly recalled her enrollment in Crafton's snow skiing class in the 1970s—when students practiced on a hill covered with tiny pellets.

After completing a bachelor's degree in recreation from Cal State Los Angeles and an MBA from Cal State San Bernardino, Smith worked nearly three decades in parks and recreation before opening her own Yucaipa-based business helping people enroll in Medicaid.

She joined the Crafton Hills College Foundation in 2018, where one of her first responsibilities was reading student scholarship applications. The stories she encountered made a lasting impression.

"I had no idea that in my little town of Yucaipa so many youth and young adults had experienced such difficult times," Smith said. "The Foundation provides relief to these types of unfortunate situations, and I am so impressed with all the wonderful and outstanding opportunities offered by Crafton Hills College to students living in our local communities."

Now serving as vice president of the Foundation's board of directors, Smith continues to champion student success through her leadership and generosity.

The ceremony concluded with a champagne toast—a Crafton tradition marking new beginnings—and the unveiling of the building's new name: **The Barbara L. Smith Event Center**. Guests then enjoyed self-guided tours of the updated facility, which now

features a state-of-the-art sound system, a massive video wall, an expanded prep kitchen, and new Foundation headquarters, complete with offices, storage, and a break room.

The refreshed space retains its 1970s charm, including its iconic indoor stairwell, while offering modern amenities for both students and the community. Soon, the college will make the center available for public rentals for anniversaries, birthdays, and other milestone celebrations.



# HOW TO GIVE

For over 50 years, the Crafton Hills College Foundation has supported CHC in advancing the educational, career, and personal success of our diverse campus community through engagement and learning. The Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization; therefore, contributions to the Foundation are tax-deductible.

Your investment will make a significant difference in the life of a student.



## PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE

This elite group of donors make a \$1,000 annual commitment to support the mission of the CHC Foundation with a President's Circle Membership. This dynamic group of alumni, parents, faculty, and friends play a vital role in supporting the College, giving the President the flexibility to embrace new ideas and emerging opportunities while meeting the evolving needs of Crafton Hills College.



## ANNUAL GIVING FUND

Contributions to the Annual Fund provide the precious gift of opportunity to thousands of deserving students by supporting scholarships and promoting excellence at the College. These unrestricted gifts give the Foundation the flexibility to respond to our student's greatest needs.



## SCHOLARSHIPS

An Endowed Scholarship Fund is established through a minimum gift of cash or stock totaling \$12,500, which can be made over a period of five years. Endowment funds are invested prudently to establish a permanent fund in which the principal is held in perpetuity and only the investment income is expended annually (payout). These funds will support a scholarship forever.



## PLANNED GIVING

The Foundation for CHC offers a variety of Planned Giving options. Whether your estate is simple or complex, there is a tax-advantaged gift planning vehicle that is just right for you. Your support will help CHC students succeed and will provide a lasting legacy for future generations.



## STUDENT AND PROGRAM SUPPORT

Crafton Hills College provides quality instruction and support services that allow our students, many of whom face serious obstacles to completion, to pursue and achieve their educational goals. We are extremely proud to be the pathway to social and economic advancement for many who would otherwise not have the opportunity to pursue a college education. The college's low cost for an excellent education allows the impact of your investment to reach more students. Your gift to support CHC Students and Programs goes further at Crafton Hills College



## NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

There are many ways you can make a lasting impact at Crafton Hills College and at the same time pay tribute to a notable and influential person or organization. The CHC Foundation is striving to secure permanent endowments to support the ever growing academic, programmatic, and student needs of the Crafton through Naming Opportunities.



## STAY CONNECTED

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