CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE ALUMNI

▶ FALL 2026

NEWSLETTER



OVER $211K RAISED

A NIGHT OF ALUMNI, COMMUNITY & GENEROSITY

ALSO INSIDE:

ALUMNUS SPOTLIGHT Bill Soqui

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT Judy Cannon

CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE FOUNDATION

— Annual Fundraising Gala —



The Crafton Hills College (CHC) Foundation celebrated the impact of education, community and philanthropy at its annual fundraising event, Bright Nights, Brighter Futures, on Wednesday, Sept. 23, on the campus quad.

The annual event raised over $211k and brought together alumni, community members, business partners and friends of the college in support of CHC students. Proceeds provide scholarships, emergency assistance, program support and other resources that help students overcome financial barriers and achieve their educational and career goals.

A highlight of this year's celebration was the presentation of CHC's 2026 Outstanding Alumnus Award to William "Bill" Soqui, whose connection to the college spans more than four decades and whose career has been defined by leadership in the fire service, emergency medical services, public safety and community service.

"Bill's connection to Crafton began more than 45 years ago, and his story represents what we hope for every Crafton student: that the education they receive here becomes the beginning of a lifetime of opportunity, leadership and service," said CHC Executive Director of Institutional Advancement Michelle Riggs. "His career, his commitment to public service and his continued connection to Crafton exemplify the impact our alumni make in their professions and communities. We are incredibly proud to recognize him as our 2026 Outstanding Alumnus."

Another powerful example of Crafton's impact was shared by alumnus River Casner (pictured on left), who reflected on his experience training as a paramedic at Crafton Hills College. During his internship, Casner responded to a call involving a man suffering a severe cardiac arrest. Drawing on the skills and training he received at Crafton, River performed lifesaving procedures that ultimately resulted in the patient making a full recovery. His story offered a moving reminder of the real-world impact of education at Crafton and the lives that can be changed through the skills, knowledge and hands-on experience students gain at the college.

Stories like River's illustrate that the impact of supporting Crafton students reaches far beyond the classroom. It can mean preparing graduates to save lives, serve their communities and make a lasting difference.

The Foundation also shared an impact video featuring current students, their challenges and their educational dreams. To watch the short video, click here.

The Crafton Hills College Foundation also extends special appreciation to this year's Platinum Sponsors: Yucaipa Rotary, Yucaipa Kiwanis, Markarian Law Group, San Bernardino Community College District and SGH Architects. Their generous sponsorships help the Foundation support students and programs when funding is not otherwise available.



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT - Judy Cannon

CHC HONORS COORDINATOR HELPS STUDENTS

DISCOVER THEIR POTENTIAL



For more than 30 years, Judy Cannon has dedicated her career to helping students succeed both in the classroom and beyond. As the Honors Coordinator at Crafton Hills College, she has spent the past 10 years creating opportunities for students to explore their academic interests, build confidence, and pursue goals they may have once thought were out of reach.

Since assuming her current role in 2016, Cannon has helped the college's Honors Institute grow from approximately 40 active students to 160, expanding its research opportunities, scholarships, and student involvement initiatives. The students themselves, however, have always been the most rewarding part of Cannon's career.

"I think we have a really special population at Crafton and especially in the Honors program," Cannon said. "Our students come from every background and have had a wide range of experiences."

Cannon did not always expect to become an educator. Although her love of reading led her to pursue a degree in English, watching how much work her mother put into teaching initially discouraged her from following the same path. Instead, she began working as a freelance editor for educational publishing houses, a job that gave her the flexibility she needed while raising young children of her own.

When her youngest child started school, Cannon found herself wanting more opportunities to interact with people. With this goal in mind, she decided to reconsider teaching as a profession and soon discovered that it was her passion.

"Once I did begin teaching, I was hooked," she said.

Cannon began teaching English at San Bernardino Valley College in 1994 and moved to Crafton Hills College around 2005. A few years later, she began teaching Honors English, an experience she found particularly enjoyable. When the Honors Coordinator position became available in 2016, she applied and was selected for the role.

The transition gave her an opportunity to support students beyond a single classroom or semester, allowing her to follow their progress over several years.

"I love teaching and I miss being in the classroom, but working with the Honors students has been incredibly rewarding," Cannon said. "I've even been able to keep in touch with quite a few of our Honors alumni, and seeing them progress with both their education and their personal lives has been very rewarding."

Under Cannon's leadership, the Honors Institute has expanded its academic opportunities and resources for students. The program now offers research workshops, mentoring, two on-campus conferences each year, and the Honors Research Fellow Award. The institute has also established scholarships supported by a $270,000 endowment, providing additional financial assistance to students. Last year, 43 students completed the Honors program and were recognized at the college's annual Honors Reception.

"My students have taught me that a little bit of help can sometimes make a huge difference in someone's life," Cannon said.

> **"You are capable of far more than you think you are, and it is usually fear and not ability that holds you back."**

Cannon believes that helping students succeed often begins with helping them see themselves as capable of succeeding. Some Honors students arrive at Crafton after doing well throughout high school. Others struggled academically before college and come determined to make a fresh start.

"A large part of being an Honors student is believing that you are or can be an Honors student," she said.

RAPID-FIRE QUESTIONS WITH JUDY CANNON

COFFEE OR TEA
NEITHER, BUT I LOVE FRESH APPLE JUICE!

FAVORITE PLACES TO EAT?
TOKYO SUSHI AND CITRONE

WHAT SHOWS ARE YOU WATCHING RIGHT NOW
"MAJOR CRIMES" AND "ANNIKA"

A BOOK THAT CHANGES THE WAY YOU THINK?
"GILEAD" BY MARILYNNE ROBINSON

EARLY BIRD OR NIGHT OWL
EARLY BIRD

SOMETHING ON YOUR BUCKET LIST THAT MIGHT SURPRISE PEOPLE?
HIKING IN THE PYRENEES MOUNTAINS IN SPAIN

At Crafton, Cannon taught a woman who had practiced medicine in Eastern Europe and wanted to improve her English before returning to the field. She repeatedly revised her papers until they were error-free and she was eventually accepted into a medical degree program at Loma Linda University.

Stories like these have shaped Cannon's view of teaching more than any professional milestone.

"They've taught me that where you are from is so much less important than where you are going," she said. "They've taught me that perseverance pays off."

These experiences have also shown Cannon the importance of looking beyond a student's appearance or past academic performance when considering their potential. Even a small amount of support can make a lasting difference, a lesson that she continues to carry in her role today.

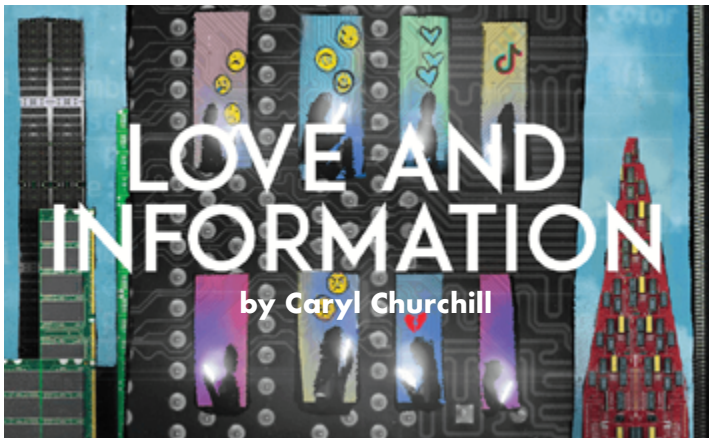
She also encourages students and alumni to use available resources and apply for opportunities even when they are uncertain about the outcome. A rejection, she tells them, is not the end of the world. Sometimes, taking a chance can lead to a yes that changes everything.

THEATER: LOVE AND INFORMATION

NOV. 13-15

Support our Theater students in their fall production of "Love and Information" – a series of rapid fire vignettes that highlight performance art rather than a traditional theatrical play. Tickets are $10 each with senior/student discounts available. For times and ticket information, go to: www.craftonhills.edu/tickets

Recommended for 13+ due to some adult language and content



CAMPUS EVENTS CALENDAR

Since this newsletter is quarterly, we aren't able to promote all our events in a timely manner, so we encourage you to visit the Events Calendar on the CHC website periodically to see if there are any campus events you may like to attend.

Go to www.craftonhills.edu/calendar for the latest on upcoming events.



ALUMNUS SPOTLIGHT - Bill Soqui

JOURNEY FROM PARAMEDIC STUDENT TO FIRE CHIEF



William "Bill" Soqui first attended Crafton Hills College in 1980, drawn by the opportunity to pursue an affordable education in emergency medical services. His decision helped shape a career dedicated to protecting communities, mentoring future first responders, and advocating for public safety.

Over the next several decades, Soqui became a firefighter-paramedic, an educator, and eventually the fire chief of Cathedral City. He later returned to Crafton as an emergency medical services instructor, helping prepare students for careers in the same field where he began his own professional journey.

Soqui grew up in San Francisco's Mission District before moving to Escondido in San Diego County at age 12. After graduating from high school in 1978, he attended Palomar College, where he played football and continued his education. His interest in emergency services developed after taking an emergency medical technician course, an experience that inspired him to pursue a career in public safety.

"I was hooked," Soqui recalled.

He soon began working for American Ambulance while serving as a reserve firefighter with the Rincon del Diablo Water District Fire Department. As his interest in emergency medicine grew, he began looking for opportunities to further his education.

Soqui had already been accepted into the paramedic program at the University of California, San Diego, when a conversation with Crafton graduate Jay Ackerman introduced him to another option. At the time, many paramedic programs were offered through universities, making them more expensive to attend.

Crafton's affordability ultimately influenced his decision to enroll. He graduated as a member of the college's eighth paramedic class and went on to earn associate degrees in both fire technology and emergency medical services.

Although the financial benefits initially drew him to Crafton, the instructors became the highlight of his experience. Soqui credits educators such as Pat Thomas, Dell James, Judy Vajna, Sylvia Alvarez, Jim Holbrook, Ed Jones, and medical director Dr. Samuel Bolivar with making his time at the college memorable.

"The instructors were the best part of attending Crafton," Soqui said.

His positive experiences with his instructors inspired Soqui to return to the college as an educator. From 1982 to 1990, he served on Crafton's emergency medical services faculty, helping prepare students for careers in the same field he had entered just years earlier.

Soqui enjoyed interacting with students, teaching practical skills, and providing hands-on instruction in the field. Teaching allowed him to share the knowledge he had gained from his own instructors while helping prepare the next generation of emergency medical professionals.

Bill Soqui dedicated decades to protecting communities and mentoring future first responders—a journey that started at Crafton Hills College

His career in public safety continued to advance alongside his work in education. After earning a bachelor's degree in business from the University of Redlands, Soqui served as division chief for the city of Rialto and deputy fire marshal for the city of Santa Clara. In 2006, he became fire chief of Cathedral City, a position he held until 2012.

Throughout his career, Soqui has emphasized the importance of kindness, recognizing that 'you never know what challenges others are dealing with.'

Bill isn't the only member of the Soqui family to attend Crafton Hills College. Two of his three daughters also studied at the college, and all three have pursued careers in health care, education, or emergency services.

His youngest daughter, Becca, graduated from Crafton's paramedic program in 2020 and now serves as a skills instructor in the college's EMT and paramedic programs. She also works as a paramedic with Confire.

After 32 years in the fire service, Soqui has had the opportunity to fulfill the career ambitions he first developed as a new EMT. His experiences have also echoed the importance of kindness and helping others achieve their goals. He encourages current Crafton students to continue pursuing their ambitions, even when they encounter difficulties along the way. "Challenges are an unavoidable part of life," he explained, "but how people respond to them can make all the difference."

RAPID-FIRE QUESTIONS WITH BILL SOQUI

MOST CHALLENGING COURSE?
CARDIAC ARRHYTHMIAS

WHAT WAS YOUR DREAM JOB AT GRADUATION?
TO BE A FIREFIGHTER-PARAMEDIC, AND I GOT TO FULFILL IT

MOST REWARDING PART OF YOUR WORK?
GETTING TO DO IT FOR 32 YEARS

ONE WORD THAT DESCRIBES LEADERSHIP?
INTEGRITY

COFFEE OR TEA?
COFFEE: DARK ROAST SUMATRA, BLACK



JOIN CRAFTON AT THE REDLANDS FAMILY SERVICES FOOD DRIVE

SAT. NOV. 14

Join your alma mater with other members of the local community to help sort through the food donations in preparation for Thanksgiving!

- Wear your CHC or green/gold colors and closed toe shoes.
- Be prepared to join the Crafton group photo at noon!
- Also, bring in at least 3 items to donate for a chance to win a raffle prize!
- Sign up for 10am to noon - or stay longer if you have more time!

> Click here to RSVP and get more information

SHARE THE ROADRUNNER SPIRIT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

GIVE A LITTLE, CHANGE A LOT



Crafton Hills College may be where your journey began, but the impact of your time here continues long after you leave campus. This holiday season, consider giving back and helping create those same life-changing opportunities for today's students. Through Giving Tuesday, our annual year-end appeal, the Pay It Forward campaign supporting Fire Academy cadets, or an employer matching gift program, there are many ways to make a difference. Your generosity helps students overcome challenges, pursue their dreams and build brighter futures. After all, one of the greatest ways to honor what Crafton has given you is to help make that same difference in someone else's life.

GIVING TUESDAY

This **#GivingTuesday**, join a global day of generosity! Celebrated each year after Thanksgiving, GivingTuesday encourages people everywhere to give back, support meaningful causes, and make a difference in their communities. It's a reminder that every act of kindness and every gift, no matter the size, can have an impact. This year, we're directing all GivingTuesday donations to **Miles that Matter**, a new scholarship fund established to help our local adult school graduates continue their educational journey at Crafton Hills College. Your generosity can help make that next step possible and open the door to a brighter future! www.craftonhills.edu/miles

---

ANNUAL GIVING

Consider making a year-end gift through our annual appeal to support Emergency Funds. More info coming soon!

PAY IT FORWARD
The San Manuel Pay it Forward Campaign

Make a lasting impact by contributing $3,000 to the Fire Academy Endowment Fund. Your gift will help ease the financial burden for future cadets by providing support for essential expenses such as books, uniforms, state testing fees and more. All donors will receive their name on the commemorative plaque displayed in the fire academy classroom. A monthly payment plan is available, making it easier to invest in the next generation of firefighters. www.craftonhills.edu/payitforward

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 makes 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 students' 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 needs of Crafton Hills College.

CRAFTON HILLS ALUMNI COLLEGE

STAY CONNECTED

alumni@craftonhillscollege.edu

909-389-3245

@mycraftonhills

Crafton Hills College Foundation & Alumni