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Countdown to Riverside City College’s 100th Anniversary

This week, the story of Chuck Schmitt who worked for many years in RCC’s Disabled Student Services.

It is 4 years and 45 weeks until RCC’s 100th Anniversary on March 13, 2016.

RCC’s ‘true local hero’ remembered

Schmitt’s dedication and courage celebrated.

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City Writer

Chuck Schmitt spent 41 years in a wheelchair, an arm and leg paralyzed after a horrific swimming accident when he was just 15. But Schmitt never let obstacles slow him down. Students, staff, and administrators at Riverside Community College knew Schmitt as the big guy with the gray beard whose personal experiences provided first-hand insights to his job working with disabled college students. From his familiar perch at the Chavez Administration Building, people looked to Schmitt for campus directions and where to get a card and blue books or a parking pass. He was regarded as a general all-around great.

Schmitt died March 14 from pneumonia. He was 55. A memorial service in his honor was held two days later.

“Schmitt was a better person than me even though he was paralyzed,” Paula deCroesky, Coordinator of Disabled Student Services, said. “He was always there for me as a wonderful listener. I will miss him dearly, but I was so glad that I knew him as a special person.”

RCC counselor Alta Hester remembers his encounter with Schmitt.

“Chuck was my first hospital visitor to boost my spirits,” she said. “I understand why he was so popular among students. Chuck really cared about assisting students with their questions or problems.”

From 1985-2000, Chuck Schmitt was a familiar figure at Riverside City College. Paralyzed for most of his life after a swimming accident, he earned his four-year degree and worked as an academic counselor to disabled RCC students. In his 1998 Faculty Lecture, Clarence Romero (Associate Professor Psychology 1987-date), said of Schmitt, “He is a man of dignity, principle, commitment, values and meaning... he’s my hero.”

The Riverside City College Instructional Media Center is bringing you this five year countdown to RCC’s 100th Anniversary. Our intention is to give everyone a weekly glance at the many people and events that have been a part of the college.

Our thanks go to the RCC Digital Library Archives and the District’s Office of Strategic Communications and Relations for allowing us to use their photo and newspaper collections. Thanks as well to all of the RCC students and Faculty Advisors that were a part of the yearbook and newspaper staffs. Thanks also to Tom Johnson and Gilbert Jimenez who wrote “the book” about RCC’s history. “Riverside City College 1916-1981: A 65 Year History” is available in the RCC Digital Library.
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