



The Merritt Connection

October 4, 2018

Dr. Marie-Elaine Burns, President

Grocery Outlet Touches Lives of Street Scholars with Generous Contribution to Merritt



When Eric Lindberg was hired as a cashier at Grocery Outlet in 1997, he became part of an organization that believed so strongly in giving back to the community that its official mission was “Touching Lives for the Better.” Throughout the years, as he’s moved up the job ladder to Co-CEO, Lindberg has kept the philosophy strong and instilled it in all the employees in 310 stores in five states, including an annual “Independence from Hunger” employee campaign which raises more than \$1 million a year.

Today, Merritt is thankful to be a recipient of the company’s generosity with a \$200 a month gift card to Merritt’s Street Scholars to meet their needs. “We are so grateful for this gift which means so much to our students,”

says Ron Moss, Executive Director of Street Scholars, which offers peer mentoring and academic and support services for the success of formerly incarcerated students. “Our students are trying to better their lives with education, but some have to make decisions of whether to buy food or books,” he says. “To have their stomachs full as they spend their days in classes means everything to them.”

Merritt and Grocery Outlet became connected thanks to another proponent of Street Scholars: former student Brandon Hargrave, whose family has been friends with Mr. Lindberg’s for many years. Brandon became affiliated with the Street Scholars after helping Ron Moss in a statistics class when they were classmates. Ron was so impressed, he hired Brandon to tutor the Street Scholars which became so successful that this year four of the scholars Brandon tutored transferred to UC Berkeley and have recently started fall classes.



President Marie-Elaine Burns, Grocery Outlet Co-CEO Eric Lindberg, and Street Scholars Executive Director Ron Moss.

“I got to know about the organization while tutoring the scholars and became very interested in helping them,” says Brandon, who is now studying for his master’s degree in sports management at the University of Oregon. “I grew up playing sports with Mr. Lindberg’s kids, and our families have kept in touch over the years. I thought he might be interested in helping out in this worthy cause for the Street Scholars.”

And in keeping with Grocery Outlet’s mission, Lindberg immediately offered to do what he could to help. “Being good community members is ingrained in every one of our employees in all



Alumni Brandon Hargrave

of our stores. So when Brandon told me what was needed, we were happy to help,” he says. “There have been lots of studies about food insecurity and education and how giving students food for just one or two meals a day can change their lives. We believe that helping this happen pays back more than what we give.”

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Grocery Outlet (continued)

Darcey Clark is one of the many Street Scholars who is appreciative of Grocery Outlet's contribution. "There are so many barriers we have to deal with in our lives," says Darcey, who has a 7-year-old son. "We often get to a point where we don't believe in ourselves and need others to show us we can make it. Getting this help from Grocery Outlet makes us feel really supported by the community."

Merritt College is also doing its part to help with food insecurity issues on campus and is grateful for Lindberg's generous contribution to help the students stay in school and be successful, which is Merritt's ultimate goal, says Dr. Marie-Elaine Burns, president of the college. "We started a food bank here on campus last year which has been very popular and shows the need in the community to eat healthy foods regularly. Having this partnership with Grocery Outlet, who are helping some of our most vulnerable students with their greatest needs, is a blessing to the students and helping the college with its overall student success."

***--Susan May
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