

Jennifer Duff: From Fashion to Fishing to Philanthropy



When Jennifer Duff graduated with an associate degree in fashion merchandising from Mesa Community College in the late '70s, she never could have imagined where her career path would take her. After a few successful years in the fashion industry, she switched gears to follow another passion—fishing.

“My first career was in fashion,” Duff said.

“Burned out, I returned to MCC briefly to reinvent myself and started to compete in fishing tournaments on the side.”

After she won her first competition, Duff was hooked. By 1986, her hobby became a full-time career and soon she was invited to live in Japan for a year to compete and promote for Japan's Bass Tournament Association.

In 1990 she returned home and started an import/export business, Jef International Inc. (named after the nickname given to her by fellow male anglers). Japanese distributors of sport fishing tackle were her first customers. She followed up on an opportunity to produce the first high-end Japanese lure in the U.S. market, the Rico, one of the topwater lures most in demand by tournament pros and sport fishermen around the world. Now she is the owner of that company, Lobina Lures, a division of Jef International, Inc.

“My education at MCC and experience as a buyer in the fashion world gave me the tools to be an entrepreneur and a leader in community endeavors,” Duff said.

Duff, a native of Mesa and a Mesa High School alumna, said she originally decided to attend MCC because it was THE education “go to” then (and now). It was an affordable and approachable transition after high school. She found the instructors were very engaged and eager to make her experience a successful one. One class she did not enjoy, however, was accounting.

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Alumnus Stephen Morgan Recalls First Days at MCC

Every time Mesa Community College alumnus Stephen Morgan steps foot on the Southern and Dobson campus, he thinks about the first time he came to campus in the '80s.

"I was living in Flint, Michigan, it was cold and my car wouldn't start," Morgan said. "I sold my car, bought a plane ticket to Arizona and signed up for classes at MCC."

Morgan never looked back. After finishing core classes at MCC, he transferred to Arizona State University and completed a bachelor's degree in finance.

He now owns his own business, Blendz Frozen Beverage Company, and regularly visits MCC's Southern and Dobson campus to deliver beverages and coffee-related products to the campus's Grounds for Thought coffee shop.

"MCC was perfect for me," Morgan said. "The idea of ASU was a little overwhelming. It was nice to start at MCC, where the classes were smaller and you received more attention from the professors. It was much different when I got to ASU. There were 300-400 people in my classes."

After graduating from ASU, he worked for Sysco, a food distribution company, and eventually started his own business in 2010. Grounds for Thought was his first official business customer.

"I tell college students not to worry about choosing a major, because you'll probably change it," Morgan said. "If I could do it over, I'd probably pursue a marketing or hospitality degree, but it's a good idea just to try to find something you'll enjoy, earn a degree and follow your passion."

“It’s funny, looking back, I struggled in my accounting class at MCC and, at the time, I didn’t see the value of those lessons,” Duff said. “Later, when I started my own business, the knowledge kicked in and I’m considered to be quite sharp in accounting! You never know how and when education comes into play.”

In addition to running her companies, Duff enjoys giving back as a community organizer, volunteer and nonprofit board member. She is a member of MCC’s Development Board, the City of Mesa’s Planning and Zoning Board and the Mesa Rotary. She is co-founder of Retail, Arts, Innovation & Livability (R.A.I.L.) and active in the Mesa Chamber of Commerce. She is a former board chair and current volunteer for the i.d.e.a. Museum.

Duff was inducted into the MCC Hall of Fame for Alumni Achievement in 2015 and will be the graduation speaker at MCC’s 2017 Commencement.



Jennifer Duff’s philanthropic interests includes support for the arts through MCC’s Development Board and former Board Chair of the i.d.e.a. Museum.

“Of all the adventures in my life, giving back is the most fulfilling,” she said.

Duff’s role as an active community member also gives her a perspective of the larger scale impact MCC has had on the community.

“MCC is a staple of our community, it’s one of the organizations that has shaped many generations,” she said. “It continues to be that ‘go to’ place and we see it as a core part of Mesa, not a separate entity.”

The future of MCC?

“It’s absolutely still the number one choice for higher education, whether it’s a first experience or a later learning opportunity,” Duff said. “In the future, MCC will have an even tighter alliance with high schools and employers to develop curriculum directly tied to the workforce. We must train students to reinvent and innovate. Employers can recruit directly from MCC and have access to students who are trained to fit into the current economy. ”



ART WALK



SPRING SPORTS



CIENEGA



FITNESS TRAIL



Get outdoors at MCC!

Looking for great outdoor activities to enjoy Arizona's gorgeous spring weather? MCC has free attractions on our beautiful campuses. Campus maps for the destinations noted below are available at the bottom of MCC's website at www.mesacc.edu. Looking for other things to do at MCC? Visit www.mesacc.edu/events.

Southern and Dobson Campus

Rose Garden

Stop to smell the roses. Located on the north side of campus along Southern Avenue, the garden is home to nearly 9,000 bushes and is the largest public rose garden in the Desert Southwest. It's not only a Mesa landmark, but a centerpiece for community, education, and innovative economic initiatives in the East Valley.

<http://rosegarden.mesacc.edu/home.html>

Inside the garden there's also a Veterans Garden with a Blue Star Memorial plaque: <https://www.mesacc.edu/veteran-services/calendar-events/veterans-rose-garden>

Art Walk

Here's a great way to get exercise and receive an art education at the same time! More than 30 public art pieces are on display throughout the Southern and Dobson campus. Grab your smart phone and take a self-guided tour starting at the visitor's parking lot near MCC's Rose Garden. Details are available at:

<https://www.mesacc.edu/community/artwalk>

Spring Sports

Go Thunderbirds! Help cheer on our local athletes for little to no cost throughout the year. Baseball entered the 2017 season ranked #6 in NJCAA DII Pre-Season Polls. Other spring sports teams are softball, basketball, tennis, track & field, and golf. News and schedules are found at the link below, or follow T-Bird Athletics on social media.

<http://mesatbirdsports.com/landing/index>

Red Mountain Campus

Cienega

Take a trip to the Red Mountain campus and you might see desert tortoises, roadrunners, quail, rattlesnakes and desert cottontails! Visit the cienega, a desert wetland surrounded by native vegetation, home to two species of endangered fish, an endangered plant species and several other species of protected reptiles and amphibians. In 2016, the cienega earned a Certified Wildlife Habitat designation from the National Wildlife Federation. The cienega is in the campus' central courtyard surrounded by the Mesquite, Palo Verde, and Desert Willow buildings.

Watch a video about the cienega and the 2014 Founders Conservation Award from the North American Native Plant Society: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Pyh-X8h33A>

Fitness Trail

Visitors can walk the two-mile trail around the perimeter of campus for views of saguaro cacti, 800-year-old ironwood trees, ocotillo, ephedra, jojoba, creosote bushes and many other remarkable plants. The footpath begins just outside the Mesquite building and boulders etched with desert critters mark quarter-mile increments.

<https://www.mesacc.edu/locations/red-mountain-campus>

MCC ranks among best community colleges

As an MCC alum, you know first-hand the quality of education available at MCC. Recent rankings from external agencies affirm MCC's reputation for educational excellence. The next time someone asks about your alma mater, back up your positive experiences with facts about today's MCC!

Visit www.mesacc.edu/alumni/newsletters/spring-2017 for details about each of the rankings.



MCC ranks 11th in the Nation for Adult Learners by Washington Monthly magazine. MCC received maximum points for ease of transfer and services for adult students, and a near perfect score in flexibility of programs.



MCC is ranked 2nd best in Arizona and 29th among the best 50 online schools in the nation according to Online Colleges.



Value Colleges ranks MCC third among the top 10 online colleges in Arizona for 2017.



MCC ranked 47th among the 50 Best Online Community Colleges in the nation by the Center for Online Education.



MCC Nursing Program ranked #1 in Arizona by RegisteredNursing.org.

Community for Accredited Online Schools ranks several MCC programs among the best in the nation. (AccreditedSchoolsOnline.org)

- #3 Art
- #7 Paramedic
- #8 Criminal Justice
- #14 Construction Management
- #17 Veterinary Technician



MCC ranked third among the best 50 online colleges in AZ for 2016-17 by Affordable Colleges Online.

Alumni Relations

1833 West Southern Ave.
Mesa, AZ 85202

Address Service Requested

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Visit us at www.mesacc.edu/events or follow us on social media

Specialty websites and calendars www.mesacc.edu/arts and www.mesacc.edu/athletics

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MCC
Alumni Association
EXCITING START, EXTRAORDINARY RETURN

Alumni & Friends is published by the Office of Institutional Advancement (IA) for the alumni of Mesa Community College

Editor **Marcy Snitzer**

 480.461.7792

 marcy.snitzer@mesacc.edu

All events are at the Southern and Dobson Campus unless otherwise noted. Full details about MCC events are available at www.mesacc.edu/events. Events in blue are free.

Touching Strangers by Richard Renaldi
January 30 – March 24, 2017
Art Gallery – Open Monday –
Friday, 9 am – 5 pm

Combo Concert – Jazz
Please RSVP at www.mesacc.edu/arts
March 2, 2017, 12:00 – 3:00 pm
Performing Arts Center Lobby

**A Choral Concert: Our Souls Delight a
Choir Concert**
March 2, 2017, 7:30 pm
Performing Arts Center

**Astronomy Nights – Wonders of the
Universe**
March 3, 2017, 6:00 – 10:00 pm
Shows every half hour from 6:00–10:00 pm
Physical Sciences Building, Planetarium

Amadeus - NT Live Screening
March 3, 2017, 7:30 pm
MCC Theatre

Desert Echoes Flute Project
March 3, 2017, 7:30 pm
Performing Arts Center

Saint Joan - NT Live Screening
March 4, 2017, 7:30 pm
MCC Theatre

Evening Lecture in Psychology
Alzheimer's Disease: What Should I Know?
March 6, 2017, 7:00 pm
MCC Theatre

MPJE Concert – Jazz Big Band
March 7, 2017, 7:00 pm
Performing Arts Center

Jazz Ensemble Concert
March 8, 2017, 7:00 pm
Performing Arts Center

**An Evening with Jimmy Santiago Baca,
Renowned Author and Poet**
March 8, 2017, 5:00 – 8:00 pm
RSVP required due to limited seating
MCC Theatre

Hedda Gabler - NT Live Screening
March 24, 2017, 7:30 pm
MCC Theatre

Closer Than Ever
March 31 – April 7, 2017, 7:30 pm
April 8, 2017, 2:00 and 7:30 pm
Performing Arts Center

Effects of Altitude
April 3 – April 14, 2017
Reception April 6, 2017, 5:30 – 7:00 pm
Art Gallery

**Astronomy Nights – Stars of the
Pharaohs**
April 7, 2017, 6:00 – 10:00 pm
Shows every half hour from 6:00–10:00 pm
Physical Sciences Building, Planetarium

Jazz Combo Concert
April 20, 2017, 12:00 – 2:30 pm
Performing Arts Center

Spring Dance Concert
April 20 – April 21, 2017, 7:30 – 9:30 pm
Performing Arts Center

Of Mice and Men
April 21 – April 29, 2017, 7:30 – 9:30 pm
April 22 and 29, 2:00 – 4:00 pm
MCC Theatre

Annual Juried Art Student Show
April 24 – May 12, 2017
Art Gallery
Open Mon-Fri, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Evening Lecture in Psychology
Psychology and Shakespeare, You Bet!
Bob Johnson, Ph.D.
April 24, 2017, 7:00 pm
MCC Theatre

**Community, Concert Band and
Orchestra**
April 25, 2017, 7:00 – 9:00 pm
Performing Arts Center

A Choral Concert
May 1, 2017, 7:30 pm
Performing Arts Center

MPJE Jazz Concert – Jazz Big Band
May 2, 2017, 7:00 pm
Performing Arts Center

Jazz Ensemble Concert
May 3, 2017, 7:00 pm
Performing Arts Center

A Choral Concert
May 4, 2017, 7:30 pm
Performing Arts Center

Chamber Ensemble Concert
May 4, 2017, 2:30 pm
Performing Arts Center

Desert Echoes Flute Project
May 5, 2017, 7:30 pm
Performing Arts Center

**Astronomy Nights – Tour of the
University with Pink Floyd (Updated)**
May 5, 2017, 6:00 – 10:00 pm
Shows every half hour from 6:00–10:00 pm
Physical Sciences Building, Planetarium