

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

Cyndi Mullenhoff



Ms. Cyndi Mullenhoff, owner and CEO of Avail Home Health, is this year's recipient of YVCC's *Distinguished Alumnus Award*. Avail Home Health is a pioneer in providing in-home, private-duty nursing in Washington State. Avail offers a range of services from hourly nursing care with registered and licensed practical nurses to home health-aide care for seniors and adults who want to continue to live in their homes. Avail Home Health employs nearly 300 people across the state of Washington.

Raised on a farm in Naches, her family settled in the valley in the 1860s. Ms. Mullenhoff received her registered nursing degree from YVCC in 1979. Growing up, Ms. Mullenhoff knew she wanted to be a nurse. An interest in home care was sparked by the stories her grandmother would tell about traveling in the Arkansas backcountry with her father who was a preacher. Each place they stopped, Ms. Mullenhoff's grandmother would do what she could to help the sick or elderly.

In 1981, Ms. Mullenhoff met a Yakima family faced with the challenge of placing their medically fragile child in a Seattle foster home. Ms. Mullenhoff believed the child's medical and emotional needs could be met in Yakima within the comfort of their home. With determination, Ms. Mullenhoff made the child her first home-care patient, working with hospitals, doctors and the surrounding medical community. Over the next 25 years, Ms. Mullenhoff expanded her business across the state, maintaining her mission to provide excellence in care and caring to each

patient. "My goal has always been to provide the best care possible in the patient's home, so their home could stay their home," Ms. Mullenhoff said.

Ms. Mullenhoff's dedication as a nurse and business owner extends to her commitment to supporting the community in Yakima. Ms. Mullenhoff and Avail Home Health have furnished and decorated conference rooms at the Coalition for the Homeless and Wellness House; they filled the Salvation Army's pantry for a month, supported The Memorial Foundation, Wishing Star, Cowiche Fire Department, Children's Village, Camp Prime Time and so many more. Ms. Mullenhoff attributes her generous spirit to the example her father set as a child. He would help local families in need without ever bringing attention to himself. "At the end of the day, what's sweeter than knowing you have helped make another's life a little better, a little easier?" she said.

Avail Home Health started a nursing school scholarship for YVCC in 2001. Each year, one graduate from Naches or Highland High School who wants to become a nurse receives a scholarship that includes tuition, books, supplies, uniforms, and fees. The scholarship also includes the nursing prerequisite classes. To date, Avail Home Health has provided four scholarships. The staff at Avail Home Health wrote about Ms. Mullenhoff, saying, "The golden threads throughout Cyndi's life are due to the generosity of spirit and kindness of heart. Cyndi Mullenhoff dreams of a better world, and each day she continues to strive for personal and professional excellence." Ms. Mullenhoff was awarded the Rotarian's *Unsung Hero Award* and the YWCA *Women of Achievement Award*. Yakima Valley Community College is pleased to honor her as this year's *Distinguished Alumnus*.

- 1982: Catherine May Bedell
- 1983: J. Alex (Lex) Maxwell
- 1984: Sid Morrison
- 1985: James R. Sorenson
- 1986: Robert Brachtenbach
- 1987: E. Frederick Velikanje
- 1988: Bill Barnett
- 1989: Bill Lee
- 1990: Gene Shields
- 1991: Mel Lewis
- 1992: Penny Hitchcock
- 1993: Pete Rademacher
- 1994: David Shinn
- 1995: Mike Bernazzani
- 1996: Erasmo Gamboa
- 1997: Elaine Ostrander
- 1998: Tom J. Chambers
- 1999: Richard E. Weller
- 2000: Mel Stottlemire
- 2001: Christopher Wiehl
- 2002: Clara R. Jimenez
- 2003: Don Crook
- 2004: Robert Card
- 2005: Charles Eccleston