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# 5 Million-Dollar Man: Alphagraphics owner's fundraising work benefits Mesa Community College students, staff

Brian Sodoma, for Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation 12:24 p.m. MST May 5, 2016

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(Photo: MCC FOUNDATION)

During the late-1980s recession, Steve Adams knew that even as a certified public accountant (CPA) he wasn't immune from the downturn. He had worked his way up to partner with Deloitte & Touche, but was still eventually laid off. For Adams, however, that situation proved to be the beginning of a new, prosperous career path.

In 1990, he invested in an Alphagraphics franchise. He grew his enterprise to three locations and now, more than 25 years later, is in the process of transitioning the business to his two sons.

Adams's story is about more than just business success. He prides himself in community engagement, serving on boards for area nonprofits and educational institutions. In the past few years, he took on the task of helping to raise more than \$5 million for Mesa Community College (MCC). He succeeded and earned the Maricopa Community College Foundation's Hero of Education Award for his efforts.

"The wonderful part about working with so many people for so many years is that I have the capacity to give back and help out," he said. "I have a responsibility to do it. It's part of who we as human beings should be."

## Connected by chance and choice



Steve Adams (Photo: MCC FOUNDATION)

Growing up in Scottsdale, Adams graduated from ASU and never attended community college. His wife and daughter in law, however, both attended MCC's nursing program. Through the years he became interested in helping MCC and eventually served on its Commission on Excellence.

For the past two decades, Adams has served on a variety of nonprofit boards, including the Mesa Chamber of Commerce, Boy Scouts of America and Rotary Club. Before serving on MCC's commission, Adams would often run into the school's leaders at events; he was impressed by how visible they were.

"I never did go to community college, but I had been connected with these people and you get to know the Mesa Community College people pretty quickly. You see them around all the time. They are very active in the community," he said.

In 2013, Adams was approached by MCC to create and chair a committee to raise \$4.5 million in endowed funds that would go towards student scholarships, faculty stipends as well as a new performing arts building.

Endowments hold the principal balance in perpetuity, but generate income for a school from the interest earned on that principal balance. Endowments usually earn about 5 percent annually.

"The whole idea of community colleges setting up endowments is pretty new. Because of budget cuts, it's something they have to do in order to survive," he added.

Adams assembled the committee and put staff in place for the effort. His team tapped Adams's list of community connections and also identified other individuals who would be willing to donate to the school. The latter wasn't an easy task, he admits.

"Reaching out to alumni is difficult at the community college level. People may come here for a year or two and leave. It's hard to keep track of where those people go," he noted.

From there, his team set up meetings and campus tours with potential donors to educate them on MCC's needs and funding goals. Now, the committee Adams created is permanent and continues to seek more funds for the college. It's one of several life and business achievements the one-time CPA can be proud of.

Being in business for 26 years, we've weathered so many highs and lows, I'm just proud to have created an environment where my sons can now make a good living and to also be respected in the community," he added.

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