

## Yavapai College News

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### **Longtime employee, one-time student named Prescott campus Outstanding Alumna**

Anyone who has visited the Yavapai College Career and Technical Education Center (CTEC) in the last 10 years probably got the grand tour from its No. 1 fan -- Susie Check.

"Once people come to CTEC, they see the benefit. It's a pretty awesome place," said Check, an instructional support specialist and YC graduate who has worked at the YC technical training center since it opened in 2007. "It's a really easy job to show off CTEC. I've got it made."

Check's unbridled enthusiasm for CTEC – unmistakable in her words and deeds – earned her the 2017 YC President's Outstanding Alumna award. The award recognizes her advocacy on behalf of CTEC and its result – student scholarships and student success. CTEC delivers cutting-edge training in more than a dozen high-demand fields such as aviation, pre-engineering, machining and gunsmithing, among others.

"Check has helped the Career and Technical Education division gain prominence as the state's premier tech education and training program and she has worked tirelessly with the Yavapai College Foundation to secure scholarship support for our students," Paul Kirchgraber, executive director of the YC Foundation, said of Check.

Check found her way to YC and CTEC via a circuitous route. The Yuma native moved to Prescott in the 1980s as a young mother. She took dance classes at YC while teaching dance at a local studio and raising her eldest daughter, Tiffany. She also chipped away at general-education classes, "not very seriously but I got through them," she recalled.

Check suspended her education when twins, Nikki and Tom, were born. She resumed her studies in the late 1990s and took a student job at the college. "I went from student worker, to part-time worker and full-time worker in an eight-month period," she said. The full-time gig was as the college's switchboard operator. In succeeding years she worked at the Prescott Valley campus and the Chino Valley Agribusiness and Technology Center before transferring to CTEC.

"It started out very small. We worked really hard to get more students in and offer more programs," Check recalled of CTEC's early days. The hard work paid off, Check said, relating how in time programs like gunsmithing would reach capacity in as little as 35 minutes. To this day, gunsmithing is a "very sought-after program," she said.

Not only is Check committed to CTEC and its mission, she has developed an affinity for its students.

"I was a student that never anticipated getting a degree, but working at the college and meeting people who were going through these programs, I thought maybe I can do that, too."

Check earned her associate's degree in 2004, graduating with daughter, Nikki, who went on to Prescott College and is now directing the YC Viticulture Program at the Southwest Wine Center in Clarkdale.

“My goal is to show students that yes there are career opportunities they can learn here, but there are also opportunities to get a degree.”

While Check may have moved around a lot early on in her YC career, she has no plans to abandon CTEC. “We’re all here so much and working on all kinds of projects. It really is kind of a family atmosphere. We’ll do anything for each other, for the students, the staff and faculty.” And, Check said, “There’s always something new on the horizon. It’s a great place to work for me.”