

Hernandez Inspires Work Ethic



Dressed in his uniform and JCCC baseball hat, Victor Hernandez, groundskeeper, looks 20 years younger than his age of 81.

“I am not rich in money. I am rich in health,” Hernandez said.

Born Oct. 7, 1926, Hernandez is JCCC’s oldest employee, working 20 hours a week mowing, weed eating, helping plant flowers, cleaning mowers, operating forklifts and picking up trash.

“I can give the younger guys a run for their money,” Hernandez says during a break from mowing.

Hernandez started at JCCC on March 6, 2000, and he says he plans to continue as long as he can do the work.

“I enjoy working. It keeps me mentally and physically fit,” he said.

Hernandez, Kansas City, Kan., lives in the same house he did as a child, purchasing it from his father when his father and mother retired to Mexico. A World War II veteran, Hernandez enlisted in the Army at age 18 and served in the 100th Infantry Division in a heavy weapons squad in Germany, discharged at the rank of corporal.

After the war, Hernandez worked for what is now BNSF as a carman for 43 years until his retirement in October 1988 at age 62. His retirement plans included traveling and taking life easy with his wife. But as Hernandez is fond of saying, “You can’t foresee the future.” He

learned that wisdom by experience. Retirement plans changed when his wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and lived 10½ years until her death in November 2007.

“The doctor told me I needed to find something to do besides sit with my wife in the nursing home every day,” Hernandez said.

Brian Anderson, JCCC maintenance supervisor, told Hernandez about the groundskeeper job, and Hernandez, at first hesitant that the college wouldn’t hire “an old man,” took the position.

“Victor is one of our best employees. He is dedicated, hardworking, self-motivated and stays on task,” said Rex Hays, director, Campus Services. “He not only does a good job for Campus Services but is a good representative for the whole college. He is helpful to everybody.”

Life isn’t all work for Hernandez. He bowls Tuesday nights and has a 189-199 average. He maintains an acre yard and travels. He was taking a road trip with Anderson this summer to the Grand Canyon.

“I feel content,” Hernandez said. 🌿

Staff

Victor Hernandez, age 81, works at the college 20 hours a week.

