



Napier News - Winter 2026
An E-Newsletter for Friends and Supporters of
The Napier Initiative at Pilgrim Place

10 Years Later, A Napier Fellow's Impact Continues



As a 2015 Napier Fellow, Hongdeng Gao implemented a pilot program for Health Bridges, with a goal to provide healthcare translation resources for low-income, limited English proficient, and underserved individuals. Last year marked the 10th anniversary of the project, which continues to partner with Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center by providing basic interpretation services in the emergency department. Says Hongdeng, a graduate of Pomona College, “The funding and mentorship that I received from the Napier Initiative allowed me and a group of incredible students at the Claremont Colleges to fully develop Health Bridges—from a mere vision—to an actual program that is still running strong today.”

READ MORE ABOUT THIS NAPIER PROJECT

If you are a past Napier Fellow, we'd love to hear from you! Email advancement@pilgrimplace.org about what you're doing now so we can share in future communications.

JOIN NAPIER FELLOWS LINKEDIN GROUP

Mark Your Calendars for the 16th Annual Napier Celebration!

Saturday, April 11 at 5 p.m.
Pilgrim Place's Decker Auditorium
665 Avery Road, Claremont



Join us on Saturday, April 11 to recognize this year's cohort of 11 exceptional Napier Fellows, while also bringing together partners like you who have invested in the next generation of socially responsible leaders and intergenerational learning opportunities.

Since 2010, The Napier Initiative has hosted a celebration to honor its Fellows, whose commitment to peace, justice, and care for the earth is demonstrated through their proposed projects. The event also honors Pilgrim Place residents who serve as mentors to these students, as well as faculty and elders connected to the seven intergenerational classes held at the Claremont Colleges this academic year.

This event will sell out, so be sure to register soon!

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Sponsorship opportunities are also available—all event proceeds support The Napier Initiative, including student projects, intergenerational courses, and mentoring.

[BECOME A SPONSOR](#)



The Napier Initiative is delighted to have all five undergraduate Claremont Colleges represented in this year's cohort of 11 Napier Fellows. The Fellows presented brief descriptions of their projects on February 15 at Pilgrim Place and will be recognized at the Celebration Event on April 11.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS YEAR'S NAPIER FELLOWS

Back to School: Elder Reflects on Napier Course Experience



Contributed by Dick Johnson, Napier Communications Committee

When Pilgrim Place resident Al Streyffeler (pictured, far right) decided to take a Napier class, he had been out of college for over six decades. Could he hold his own in a class of bright college students? Would they be derisive? Why was he taking the class, anyway? His wife, Mavis, had taken a Napier class years before and liked it. And since Al was an Elder and there were no grades involved, his performance in the class would not affect any future

career plans (of which he, of course, had none). And yet, it took some courage to jump in. When it was over, he was glad he had.

The course that fit his schedule was “Effective Learning Across the Lifespan,” Sharda Umanath’s class at Claremont McKenna College. “Memory and the possibility of dementia are frequent issues for elders,” said Al. When he mentioned the course at lunch, other Pilgrim Place residents immediately showed interest.

Al found the course “demanding but enjoyable,” and found that the undergraduate students appreciated and accepted him. “At first, I had some apprehension about how I would be able to keep up and understand, but they were never dismissive.” He had prepared himself for the possibility that the classroom, after so many years, would be somewhat strange. “I always felt a bit off balance, but I survived and enjoyed getting back into the academic world.”

Something special happened when Al invited the students to lunch at Pilgrim Place. After lunch, all the students accepted his invitation to visit his yard and his display of artwork. Upon reflecting on that experience, a passage that Al read in class stayed with him: “Creativity is more important than knowledge.” On that day, seeing his creations seemed to help his fellow students gain an important understanding of who he was. “I would certainly recommend the program,” he shared. “I think it’s excellent and amazing.”

Remembering Barbara Troxell



At the October 24 Napier on the Ground event, Napier Administrator and Pilgrim Place Resident Janet Evans delivered a moving tribute about Barbara Troxell, whose leadership as a Napier Co-Founder and former Council Chair has left a lasting mark on the program. We are honored to share an excerpt of that tribute in recognition of Barbara's legacy:

There are some folks who are natural leaders. Almost as soon as you meet them, you know you want to be on their team. Barbara Troxell has been one of them, without a doubt. Her clear kindness, wisdom, intelligence, care and concern for everyone were immediately evident... and we responded by knowing that we wanted to be involved in whatever she was leading.

Here at Pilgrim Place she was among the first people to see the importance of the Napier Initiative. She had known the Napiers at Stanford University and recognized that linking Pilgrim Place residents and students who shared a passion for social justice would benefit all those involved as well as the wider world.

As Chair of the Napier Council for seven years, Barbara led us with great skill through triumphs and challenges. She nimbly managed COVID... Decisions about increasing our awards, adding additional courses, raising funds, maintaining strong relationships with an ever-changing cast of people at the colleges, presenting our story at a national Leading Age convention, and increasingly complex administrative imperatives were deftly managed with Barbara's clear focus on the Napier mission and her calm, steady, caring leadership.

Our gratitude to Barbara is beyond measure... the creation of the Barbara Troxell Prize for the Napier Fellow designated each year as the alternate awardee is but one way of expressing our thanks and affection for Barbara and her leadership.

[READ BARBARA'S OBITUARY](#)

[SUPPORT THE TROXELL PRIZE](#)

Napier Professor Embraces Benefits of Intergenerational Learning



We used to see academic institutions as “ivory towers,” distinct from the “real world.” We put philosophers on the top floor, the epitome of thinkers, not active participants. Professor Sue Castagnetto (pictured far left) upends this notion. With a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Stanford, she has found ways to join practice to theory.

Sue's work took an important turn when she was asked to teach a course for Scripps College in philosophy of feminism. She began doing research and talked to her doctoral advisor to plan the course. “It was like a light bulb turning on,” Sue said. She saw that women philosophers have rarely been active participants in the discipline. “One question feminist philosophers have asked is whether there has been a male bias in philosophy. Well, how many female philosophers can you name in the 25 centuries since Plato?”

Sue began to apply a feminist framework to topics she had previously taught. Ultimately, she became the director of the Intercollegiate Feminist Center for Teaching, Research and Engagement at Scripps College, creating feminist philosophy classes, building connections with community organizations, and organizing educational events on feminist and social justice issues. Following a conference she co-organized on women and prisons, she became involved in a local network that advocated on behalf of incarcerated women and began taking students to the local women's prison for conversations with young women incarcerated there. This evolved into her current Napier course, “Gender, Crime and Punishment,” and continuing connections with the women's prison.



Learning about the Napier Initiative, Professor Castagnetto began to explore the advantages to her college students of being in an intergenerational class with elders. She taught her first Napier class, “Feminism and Science,” in 2017, with elder Chris Blackburn as a Napier “community educator.” Seeing the wonderful dynamic of learning that happens when undergraduates and elders come together in the classroom, she has now converted all of her courses to Napier courses. Over the years, Sue has engaged in various activism and community-building projects ranging from taking students to the women's prison to doing creative writing with women inside to advocating for improved public policies.

There are not that many in the academy who fully embody the Napier values of supporting peace and reconciliation, caring for our fragile earth, and fostering justice for all. We are grateful for the example and leadership of Professor Sue Castagnetto.

Your tax-deductible contribution directly supports
The Napier Initiative, including student projects, intergenerational courses,
and mentoring. Gifts of all sizes make a difference and ensure these
enriching experiences, now and in the future.

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Pilgrim Place in Claremont | 625 Mayflower Road | Claremont, CA 91711 US