PRESIDENT'S REPORT





The past two months were busy with a successful summer session. There is never a time that we are not humming along. On July 29th. California Senator Mike McGuire traveled to the North County Center. We gave a tour of the site and an overview of the future

Willits Phase II Building. The future building will have dedicated spaces for the construction and fire science programs. Senator McGuire is a long-time supporter of Mendocino College.

In the vein of building programs that support critical community needs, like allied health, we are moving to the next phase of transitioning the Licensed Vocational Nursing (LVN) program from the Ukiah Adult School to Mendocino College. The first Mendocino College cohort will begin in 2026. This is a multi-year strategic collaboration that will benefit our region and lower program costs for students. The LVN certification provides wide employment opportunities in many different allied health areas, including long-term care facilities, psychiatric health facilities (PHF), hospice and

palliative care, physicians' offices and clinics. This certification has career ladders to program such as the LNV-RN bridge program and Registered Nursing (RN) programs. This is an example of our many initiatives to partner and support in areas of demonstrated workforce expansion.

ENROLLMENTS

Summer 2025 began with increasing enrollment at all of our locations (Ukiah, Lakeport, Willits, Fort Bragg, Online). Summer 2025 FTES is 11% higher than 2024. This places the district in a favorable advantage. Summer is the start of our annual enrollment year (Summer, Fall, Spring). It is always better being slightly ahead, than trying to catch up later in the year. 🖔

SEMESTER	ACTIVE ENROLLMENTS	ACTIVE STUDENTS	TOTAL FTES
SUMMER 2025	4272	2515	414.88
SUMMER 2024	3627	2319	371.67
SUMMER 2023	2700	1684	253.45
SUMMER 2019	2997	1907	307.95

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



CALIFORNIA BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The 2025–26 California State Budget brings several positive developments for Mendocino College. You can review the full Joint Budget Analysis from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office here.

Positive Highlights:

- A 2.3% COLA increase to our general fund.
- A 2.3% COLA for select categorical programs, including Adult Education, EOPS, DSPS, CalWORKs, and CARE.
- 2.35% systemwide enrollment growth funding.
- \$14 million awarded for construction of the Willits Phase II Building, which will house our Construction, Fire Science, and EMT programs. Planning begins this fall.

Challenges to Note:

- Two-month deferral of apportionment payments for May and June 2026. We will use general fund reserves to maintain operations and payroll during this period.
- No COLA for several key categorical programs, including Student Equity Achievement, Strong Workforce, Basic Needs, NextUP, MESA, Mental Health Services, Veterans, part-time faculty office hours, and part-time faculty health insurance.
- No funding allocated for the Physical Plant and Instructional Materials Support Program.

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID & PROGRAM UPDATES

At the federal level, there is more uncertainty than immediate change. Our primary connection to federal policy remains financial aid, which continues to be disbursed as usual.

The recently passed federal legislation (July 4, 2025) introduces several changes to Pell Grant eligibility, effective July 2026:

- A new Workforce Pell Grant program will be introduced, but it will not cover remedial, non-credit, ESL, or study abroad coursework.
- Students with full-ride scholarships will be excluded from Pell eligibility.
- Pell Grants will remain available to students enrolled less than half-time.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education is piloting stricter identity verification for FAFSA applicants starting summer 2025, with a broader rollout expected in the fall. While we support efforts to prevent fraud, we are mindful of the potential barriers this may create for students with limited access to technology. We will continue advocating for balanced solutions that protect aid integrity without limiting access.



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAMS

At Mendocino College, we remain steadfast in aligning our programs and practices with federal laws, California codes and regulations, and the Constitutions of the United States and California. We continue to uphold our Mission, Vision, and Values in all that we do.

- Our Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) grant is entering its third year of a five-year cycle.
- The High School Equivalency Program (HEP) grant cycle has concluded. We've submitted a new application and are awaiting notification. In the meantime, the program will continue through one-time funding for the upcoming academic year.

FINANCIAL AID

The U.S. Department of Education launched a nationwide initiative to combat identity fraud in federal student aid programs, with a focus on firsttime FAFSA® applicants. As a result, students were selected for identity and income verification, which has led to additional documentation requirements and delays in Pell Grant and Title IV aid disbursements at Mendocino College. Students selected for identity verification are required to appear in person with a valid government-issued ID to confirm their identity. In some cases, students were flagged for further verification after receiving their aid; if they do not complete the required documents, their disbursed grants are reclassified as overpayments, triggering repayment obligations and financial stress. Financial Aid staff have been actively communicating with affected students to help them resolve verification issues and avoid repayment consequences. We

BASIC NEEDS

Over the summer, the Basic Needs Office has undergone several structural changes to better serve our students. We are excited to announce a new partnership with Mendo Food Network as our food supplier, beginning in August. Additionally, there have been statewide updates to the CalFresh application assistance process, and we have been actively adapting to these changes to ensure a smooth experience for our students in Fall 2025.

We are also experiencing staffing transitions, including welcoming a new group of student workers. All incoming student staff will participate in comprehensive training during the second week of August to prepare them to effectively support their peers.



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



FALL STUDENT WELCOME EVENT

Held on Tuesday, Aug 5th and Wednesday, Aug 6th, this event is a revamp of a former 'Welcome' event initially geared toward new students. As we are becoming more aware that many of our students start, stop, and choose to return to us, we designed an event that celebrates the reengagement and offers opportunities to explore pathways. In addition to this, we know our students are busy and oftentimes juggling multiple roles. As such, our guided pathways and student services team worked collaboratively to plan and build a new type of welcome event, which took on a conference-style approach, offered at various times to support our working students.

The event kicked off with a keynote foundational presentation from our counseling faculty laying the foundation of the 'whys' for comprehensive education planning. This informative presentation by Jose Hernandez was followed by opportunities to dive deeper via workshops presented by our instructional faculty and student service providers. The event ended with students and their families engaging with our college departments via tabling in Pomo Plaza. Each date focused on specific pathways, offering students an opportunity to choose the date and topics that most aligned with their academic and career goals.



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS WITH EAGLE CONNECT

At Mendocino College, student success is a shared responsibility—and Eagle Connect is one of the key tools that helps us work together to support our students effectively. As faculty and staff, your engagement with Eagle Connect strengthens our collective efforts to identify student needs early and respond with timely support.

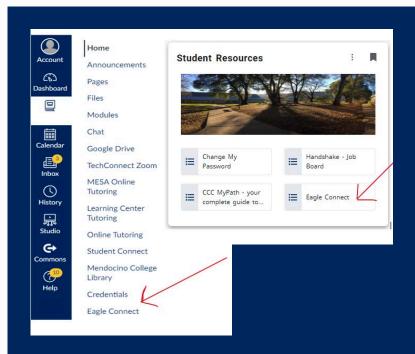
Eagle Connect allows instructional faculty to schedule office hours using a calendar feature that integrates seamlessly with Outlook and Google. More importantly, it empowers faculty to raise flags for academic concerns, make referrals to campus resources, and send kudos to recognize student achievements. These actions generate email notifications and dashboard updates that help students stay informed and engaged with their academic progress.

Throughout the term, students may receive updates related to attendance, performance, or other areas of concern. When a flag or referral is raised, students may be contacted by a Retention Specialist, Counseling Faculty, or Student Services team member. Faculty or staff who initiate these actions can also receive follow-up notifications, providing insight into how the concern was addressed—ensuring that support is not only initiated but followed through.

Getting Started

To access Eagle Connect, log in via My Mendo or Canvas; students can find it listed under the Student Resources card. Students are encouraged to complete their profile and add contact information to ensure they receive timely outreach. If students need help, they can use the Raised Hand feature in the top-right corner of the dashboard to connect privately with our support services.

Your participation in Eagle Connect helps create a coordinated, student-centered approach to success. *Thank you for being an essential part of this network*.



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



STUDENT MFA UPDATE

We will turn on Multifactor Authentication (MFA) for students in October 2025. Students who don't have access to a phone or tablet can request a hardware token. To help with the transition, students can now opt in to MFA so they can have it all set up and ready to go for when it is required.

We are including all the students who opt in before October in a drawing for prizes, including a gaming keyboard and mouse. We've also created a web page explaining the process, have placed information on the digital signage displays, created a flyer, and will be putting the information on social media. Feel free to share the web page with your students.

VOLUNTEER FOR EAGLES WELCOME WEEKS & PASSPORT TO LEARNING

The Fall semester is underway and gearing up for two exciting weeks of student engagement. We're inviting faculty, staff, and administrators to help make it a success!

WEEK 1: AUGUST 18–21

Volunteers are needed to staff information tables at the Flagpole and Lowery Student Center entrances to welcome and assist students.

All Student Support offices will be open to provide guidance. Additionally, IT staff will be available in the Learning Center from 8:30–9:30 AM and 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Monday through Friday, to support students with technology needs. Week 1 signup here.

WEEK 2: AUGUST 25–28

This week features a variety of activities, including Passport to Learning on Tuesday, August 26 and Wednesday, August 27 from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM, and a group photo with President Karas on Wednesday at 12:15 PM. Volunteers are needed for setup and cleanup, tabling and food service, and general event support. Week 2 signup here.

One of the highlights of week two is the dunk tank, and we're looking for faculty, staff, and administrators to volunteer for this fun and memorable activity! Sign up for the dunk tank here.

Your support and participation are greatly appreciated. For questions, please contact Naoto Horiguchi at nhoriguc@mendocino.edu.

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



SCHOLARSHIP FUNDED FOR MENDOCINO COLLEGE NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS

In 2024, Kyle Whiterock of the Mendocino College Native American Student Resource Center, together with students from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People Movement, envisioned a scholarship to support Native American students. Around the same time, Rev. Dr. Michele Robbins of Ukiah United Methodist Church sought a way to direct funds raised for Native American students; they connected, and the first scholarship was funded.

Upon enlisting the help of other United Methodist churches in the Mendocino Circuit, their combined efforts raised \$1,641 for the fall semester. Whiterock noted, "The check for \$1,641 will cover not just one, but three new scholarships for the fall semester. This allows the club and the college time to further their fundraising efforts."

Program manager Brian Williams added, "Our Native American students will benefit tremendously from your work and thoughtfulness in their future success here at Mendocino College!"

The original article was submitted by the Ukiah United Methodist Church & published July 3, 2025. Read the full article in the <u>Ukiah Daily Journal</u>.



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAM

The program has seen significant growth since Jimmy Bailon joined the team as Program Manager. Jimmy has been actively building relationships with justice system partners and is currently preparing for the launch of the CCS 100 course, which will be offered at Juvenile Hall. He has been familiarizing himself with college systems, developing program materials, and planning for the upcoming academic year. His efforts are focused on engaging justice-impacted youth and young adults ages 12–25, creating pathways for their academic and personal success.



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



L-R: WMC Co-President Nona Smith; Michael Grady, Creative Writing Professor Kailyn McCord; (front) Kersten Tanner; professor Vince Poturica; Sophia Myers, professor Molly Dwyer.

WRITERS OF THE COAST HONOR MENDOCINO COLLEGE STUDENTS

The Writers of the Mendocino Coast (WMC) celebrated three Mendocino College students—**Sophia Meyers, Michael Grady**, and **Kersten Tanner**—as the first recipients of its new creative writing awards. Honored at WMC's annual member appreciation event, each student received \$300 and shared excerpts from their nominated works, selected by their writing instructors for their originality, emotional depth, and literary craft.

WMC plans to make the awards an annual tradition, supporting student writers through community fundraising and local partnerships.

The original article was published June 12, 2025, in the Mendocino Beacon. Read the full article at www.mendocinobeacon.com

MC RADIO HOUR HIGHLIGHTS STUDENT VOICES & ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

Each month, Mendocino College Foundation Executive Director Julie McGovern hosts a public affairs broadcast on KZYX, offering listeners insights into the people and programs that shape our institution.

The July episode featured Associated Students of Mendocino College (ASMC) incoming President JJ Lopez and incoming Vice President Diandra Acosta. They shared their personal journeys to Mendocino College and highlighted the faculty, counselors, and support staff who have played a pivotal role in their success. Listen to the episode

In the August episode, Vice President of Academic Affairs Debra Polak joined the conversation to discuss new course offerings for Fall 2025, updates from our Centers, and the college's ongoing collaborations with community partners. VP Polak also reflected on her journey at Mendocino College, which began in 2000 as a member of the English faculty. Listen to the episode

Do you have an idea for a topic or a guest for the Mendocino College Radio Hour? Send your suggestions to Julie McGovern at jmcgovern@mendocino.edu.

Listen for free on Spotify or Transistor!



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



BLOOD DRIVE SAVE THE DATE

DATE: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 TIME: 10:00 a.m. - 1:45 p.m.

LOCATION: 1000 Hensley Creek Rd Ukiah, CA 95482

Because of you, life doesn't stop



COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVE

Join us in supporting local healthcare needs by donating blood at the Mendocino College Ukiah Campus on Tuesday, September 30, 2025, from 10:00 AM to 1:45 PM.

Things to know before you donate:

- Review Blood Donor Eligibility before making an appointment.
- Appointments are strongly encouraged.
- Arrive well-nourished and hydrated.
- Bring valid identification with your first and last name, and either a photo or date of birth.
- The donation process takes approximately one hour (allow an additional 30 minutes for a Power Red Cell Donation).
- Consider powering up your donation with an automated Power Red Cell Donation.
- Donors are encouraged to complete the Fast Track Health History questionnaire on the day of their donation by visiting Vitalant.org/health or logging into their donor profile.

Schedule your appointment here.



BLUE ZONES - PURPOSE PATH

Mendocino College invites students to explore what gives life meaning through the Blue Zones Purpose Workshop, held on Friday, September 5, from 12:00-2:00 PM at the Coast Center, Room 104.

This engaging workshop will guide participants in identifying their unique interests and talents, and how these can be fulfilled through activities such as school clubs, volunteering, and more. Following the workshop, attendees are invited to join a 10-week Moai—a small group experience designed to build community and deepen the exploration of purpose.

For more information, visit mendocinocounty.bluezonesproject.com





JOIN US ON THE **PURPOSE PATH**

You have a purpose. You are here for a reason.

This workshop will help you to think about what gives you a sense of purpose, how your interests and talents can be better fulfilled through activities like school clubs, volunteering, and what next steps you might want to make to create a foundation for the future

Discover the key to unlocking your true purpose and embark on a lifetransforming journey with our free Blue Zones Purpose Workshop.



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5 12:00 - 2:00 PM MENDOCINO COLLEGE COAST CENTER **ROOM 104** 1211 DEL MAR DR FORT BRAGG, CA



mendocinocounty.bluezonesproject.com

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



BIG LOVE, BIG VISION: Verbrugghe Leads Mendocino College Theater Program

Actor, writer, and educator Lucas Near-Verbrugghe returns to his Mendocino County roots as he steps into the role of drama instructor at Mendocino College, succeeding longtime faculty member Reid Edelman. With a rich background in stage, film, and television—and deep ties to local arts institutions like SPACE and the Ukiah Players Theatre—Near-Verbrugghe brings a passion for storytelling, community engagement, and arts education.

He'll kick off the semester directing *Big Love* by Charles Mee, a bold, physical production exploring themes of asylum, freedom, and human connection. *Big Love* will run October 16-27, 2025, in the Center Theatre. For more information about the Mendocino College Theatre program, visit its webpage here.

The original article was published August 3, 2025, in the Ukiah Daily Journal. Read the full article at www.ukiahdailyjournal.com.

This past May, Mendocino College celebrated the successful completion of its inaugural Faculty Diversity Mentorship Program (FDMP) cohort. Developed over two years with input from classified professionals, faculty, and management—and supported by Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) funding—the program is designed to prepare individuals for careers in community college instruction.

Six participants completed the year-long program, which included fall workshops and spring mentorships with Mendocino College faculty. The cohort presented equity-focused capstone projects at the FDMP Symposium, showcasing their growth and commitment to inclusive teaching.

We're proud to share that more than half of the mentees have already secured part-time teaching positions at Mendocino College or other institutions. A huge thank you to everyone who made this launch a success, especially Program Coordinator Marcello Bice for his leadership and organization throughout the launch.

FDMP will run every other year, with the next application cycle opening in the 2025–26 academic year. The next cohort will begin in 2026–27. If you know someone interested in exploring a career in community college instruction, please encourage them to contact Marcello Bice at mbice@mendocino.edu.

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



MENDOCINO COLLEGE & COUNTY JAIL PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN LANDSCAPING

Mendocino College, in coordination with the Mendocino County Jail's Inmate Services education program, recently awarded certificates in Landscape Maintenance to a group of inmates who completed a hands-on course taught by instructor Joshua Sternberg. The course required weeks of coursework, assignments, and a final project.

This initiative is part of a broader educational effort that includes adult literacy, GED preparation, collegelevel courses such as regenerative agriculture, and recovery programs. Eleven participants were recognized for their achievement by both the Sheriff's Office and Mendocino College:

Amanda Chapman, Tara Hill, Soyria Ramos, Andrew Riffle, Jason Vigil, Matthew Williams, Oscar Bernal, Christopher Ashurst, Ernest Salo, Antonio Lopez, and Hugo Muniz.

"These individuals have taken meaningful steps toward personal growth and embraced restorative practices during their time in custody," the Sheriff's Office shared.

The original article was published July 1, 2025, in the Mendocino Voice. Read the full article at www.mendovoice.com

TRANSFER CENTER LAUNCHES FALL EVENTS TO SUPPORT UNIVERSITY-BOUND STUDENTS

As the fall semester approaches, Mendocino College's Transfer Center is preparing to support students through the 2025–2026 university admissions cycle. Two key events will help guide students through the transfer process:

College and University Day

Scheduled for Tuesday, October 14, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Pomo Plaza, this event will connect students with university representatives and provide information on admissions and transfer pathways. Sponsored by Savings Bank of Mendocino County, the event is open to all students and does not require registration.

Participating UC Campuses for TAG Workshops

Throughout September, the Transfer Center will host five virtual workshops to assist students in applying for guaranteed admission to the following UC campuses:

- UC Davis
- UC Irvine
- UC Merced
- UC Riverside
- UC Santa Barbara
- UC Santa Cruz

These workshops are designed to demystify the UC Transfer Admissions Guarantee (TAG) process and provide step-by-step guidance.

Faculty and staff are encouraged to share these opportunities with students who may benefit from transfer support.

Register for TAG Workshop here.



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS

HR UPDATES

Recent Staffing Changes:

Oscar Moreno will be moving to H.S.I. Retention Specialist at the Lake Center from HEP Outreach Specialist, effective 6/1/2025.

Eliza Grider will be moving to Foundation Development Coordinator from Administrative Assistant II - Foundation, effective 7/1/2025.

Nayely Garcia will be moving to HR Technician (Confidential) from Nursing Program Support Technician, effective 10/1/2025.

Welcome, Summer and Fall 2025 New Hires!

FACULTY

Claire Dodd - Full-Time Biology Faculty, effective 8/15/2025; Ukiah Campus

Nicky Ellet-Petersen - Full-Time English Faculty, effective 8/15/2025; Lake Center

Leslie Kline - Full-Time Faculty/Director, LVN Program, effective 11/1/2025; Ukiah Campus

Lucas Near-Verbrugghe - Full-Time Theatre Faculty, effective 8/15/2025; Ukiah Campus

Gabrielle Visco - Full-Time, Categorical Faculty, ZTC/Low-Cost Librarian, effective 8/15/2025; Ukiah Campus

CLASSIFIED

Felipe Chavez - H.S.I. Retention Specialist, effective 6/1/2025; Coast Center & Ukiah Campus

Joshua Miller - Utility/Security Worker, effective 7/1/2025; Ukiah Campus

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Jimmy Bailon - Program Manager, Restorative Justice, effective 6/1/2025; Ukiah Campus

Congratulations Summer 2025 Retirees!

After a long and committed career with Mendocino College, these lucky folks are turning the page and starting a new chapter!

Nancy Heth, EOPS Specialist – 34 Years of Service

Eric Hoefler, Director of MESA & STEM Success – 6 Yrs. of Service

HUMAN RESOURCES CORNER

Human Resources at Mendocino College provides a supportive atmosphere to all current and future employees. Your friendly Human Resources Team would like to highlight some useful links:

Check Out Open Positions

• Employment Opportunities

Training Opportunities

- Training with Keenan SafeColleges
- Vision Resource Center

Access Collective Bargaining Agreements

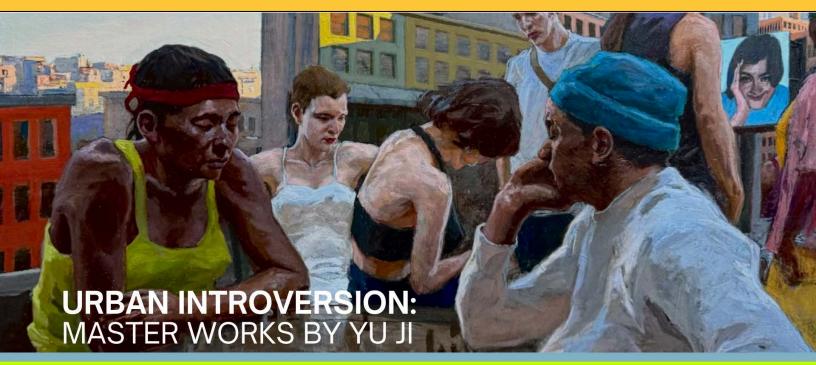
• Collective Bargaining Agreements

Retirement Links

- <u>CalPERS</u> <u>Classified Employees</u> and <u>Managers</u>
- CalSTRS Certificated Employees & Educational Administrators
- <u>403(b) Supplemental Retirement</u>



REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS



AUGUST 15 - OCTOBER 26, 2025

OPENING RECEPTION - SEPT 4TH 4:30-6:30
FREE | OPEN TO THE PUBLIC | MENDOCINO COLLEGE GALLERY

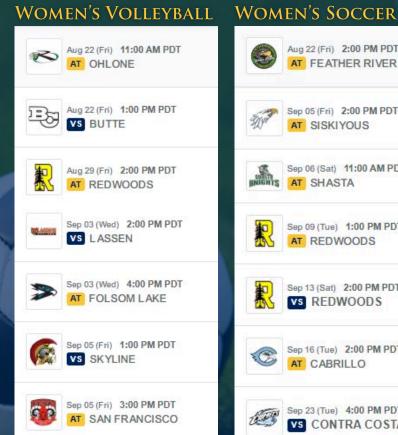
MENDOCINO

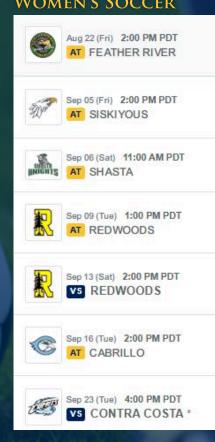
COLLEGE

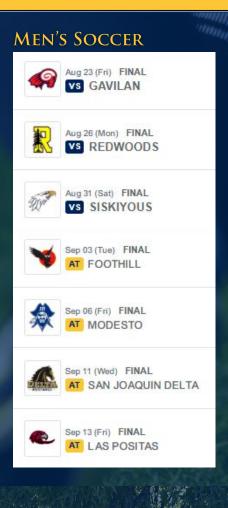


THIS EVENT IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY

REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT KARAS







UKIAH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



featuring conductor emeritus Les Pfützenreuter

Walking with Beethoven

SATURDAY, SEPT 13 SUNDAY, SEPT 14

Brahms - Concerto for Violin & Violoncello, op. 102, A minor Beethoven - Symphony No.7

TICKETS AT THE DOOR

or online at

UKIAHSYMPHONY.ORG



MENDOCINO COLLEGE CENTER THEATRE



