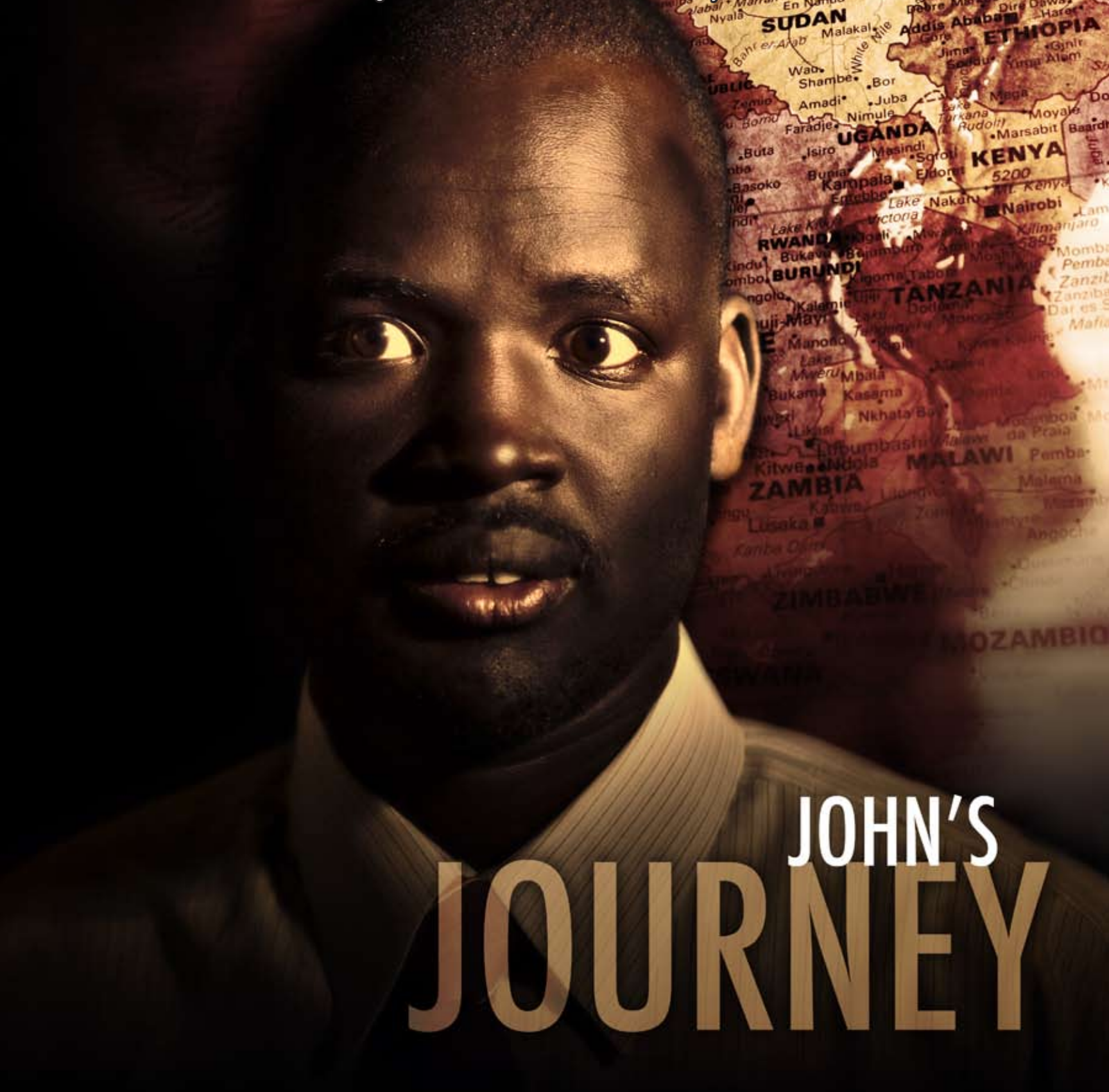


SPRING 2009

Western

The magazine of Missouri Western State University



JOHN'S
JOURNEY



The Western Magazine is a publication of the University Advancement Office for alumni and friends of Missouri Western State University and the St. Joseph Junior College.

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President's Perspective



Dear Friends,

I've been spending a good portion of my time in Jefferson City, Mo., lately meeting with other college and university presidents. Among the topics of discussion are proposed budget cuts and state support for higher education. From these meetings, I have come to the following conclusions: 1) There is a correlation between economic development and an educated workforce; 2) The workforce needs to be more educated, not less; and 3) The workforce needs to be educated differently using new technology, new teaching methods, and through the availability of applied learning experiences.

Currently, the state of Missouri ranks 47th out of 50 states on per capita spending for higher education. Out of nine publicly state-supported institutions, not including the MU system, Western ranks sixth in per student allocation. In case you're keeping score at home, the state of Missouri ranks third from the bottom in terms of funding for public higher education and Western ranks third from the bottom in terms of receiving state funds.

In January, Gov. Jay Nixon recommended to the legislature that funding should remain the same as it was in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 for state-supported institutions of higher education in FY 2010, provided the universities do not raise tuition. This is a good short-term solution. In the long term, however, this

would put our funding levels slightly ahead (\$1.7 million) of our FY 2001-2002 appropriation – far behind not only our fellow state institutions but behind our neighboring states of Nebraska, Kansas and Iowa which rank 10th, 16th, and 17th respectively in terms of per capita spending. In 2005, 33.2 percent of Missouri's college students attained a degree. That same year, Iowa students graduated at a rate of 37.4 percent, Kansas at 38.6 percent, and Nebraska at 40.4 percent.

Unless we as citizens and the state Legislature make funding for higher education a priority, our economic development will continue to decline. As I mentioned in an earlier article, nearly 20 percent of children in Buchanan County live below the poverty level. Ten percent of our elderly live below the poverty level and our average weekly income is more than \$200 less than the national average.

This does not mean that Western will cease to grow. In fact, the future is very bright. With the possibility of the Kansas City Chiefs training camp, a fifth consecutive year of enrollment increases, the continued on-time construction of Remington Hall, and graduate program expansion, we are continuing to progress. Additionally, the Achieving Greatness campaign, already at 94 percent of its goal in March, will easily reach its \$15 million funding goal.

We do need you, our alumni and friends, to continue to encourage your legislators to make funding for higher education a priority in the state of Missouri. The rate at which we progress is dependent on this support.

Robert A. Vartabedian
President

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Photo by Eric Callow '97, Double E Images.

Photo direction: Scott Johnson.

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22 Greek life, Western style

Share the memories of alumni as they reminisce about Greek life at Western, and read about what's up with Greek life on campus today.

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Fire behavior course held on campus

Ask any conservation agent and they will tell you of the necessity of prescribed burns, which are regulated fires to reduce or eliminate material on the forest floor. Now ask any of the 25 Western students and four community members about the weeklong wildfire behavior and wildfire fighting course they took over the semester break, and they'll explain everything you want to know, as they are now certified to participate in prescribed burns for habitat management.

Dr. Cary Chevalier, associate professor of biology who coordinated the course offering, said in addition to federal agencies, more state agencies are mandating the prescribed burn certification, so he offered the course to give Western students a competitive edge when they are applying for jobs in the conservation field.

Twenty students in the class passed two additional tests and became certified to fight wildland fires as well: the fire shelter deployment and the arduous pack test.

Wildland firefighters always carry an emergency fire shelter with them (it sort of looks like a fireproof sleeping bag). If the fire gets out of control and is heading their way, they can pull out their shelter and scramble inside, hoping it will protect them from the flames. In order to pass the test, students had 25 seconds to pull an emergency fire shelter out of its pack and get inside.

Biology major Mickey Sigmon wasn't sure she'd ever want to fight a wildland fire, but she deployed the fire shelter in 22 seconds. "The class was great, there were things I learned that you just wouldn't ever think of," she said.

The arduous pack test took a little longer than 25 seconds. In order to gain certification, students had to walk three miles wearing a 45 lb. pack -- in less than 45 minutes.

The course was co-sponsored by Western's biology department and the student chapter of The Wildlife Society and taught by instructors from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs. ■

PR class benefits nonprofits

At the end of this spring semester, six nonprofit organizations in the area will have a complete public relations package at no cost to them, and several Western students will have gained great public relations experience. It's all part of a two-course sequence offered in the fall and spring and taught by Dr. Diane Gorcyca, professor of speech; and Dr. Ken Rosenauer, professor of journalism.

In the fall Public Relations course taught by Diane, groups of students select a nonprofit organization, and in cooperation with that organization, develop a public relations campaign proposal. They must assess the current situation, develop long- and short-term objectives, conduct research on the organization's target audiences, and develop implementation strategies to accomplish the short-term objectives.

"It's very successful," Diane said. "It gives students practical experience in what is involved in planning and putting together a proposal."

At the end of the semester, the students go to the organizations and present their public relations proposal. "We want them on site because that's what public relations professionals do, and the students really feel professional."

Then for the spring semester, the same students take Ken's Public Relations Writing class where they produce the tactics they proposed in the fall, such as press releases, brochures and flyers. The final packages are delivered to the organizations at the end of the semester.

Diane has taught her class for 16 years, and she and Ken have been *continued next page*



Students in the "Educational Revolution" freshman learning community shop for the family that the class adopted over the holidays. The learning community, taught by Dawn Terrick, left, instructor of English; and Cathy Gann, reading and study skills coordinator; includes Lindsay O'Neal, Jarrel Berryman, and Kaleigh Beger.



Adventures abound in PE class

If you're gonna teach someone how to do something, you better have done it yourself, at least once. That's the philosophy behind assistant professor of physical education Patty Hartenbower's Methods and Techniques of Adventure Activities course.

Don't let the "methods and techniques" in the name fool you; the operative word for the class is truly "adventure." Throughout the semester, students in the class experience horseback riding, trap shooting, archery, canoeing, backpacking, fishing, rappelling, rock climbing, ice skating and more.

"I had no idea of the things we were going to be doing," said Jessi Moody, a physical education major from Platte City, Mo., who was waiting her turn at Western's trap shooting range. "But I love being outside."

In the course, which is designed for those who want to teach physical education, the students work in pairs to select an activity and teach their classmates

about it. Then the adventure outside the classroom begins.

Jessi paired with Robyn Korthanke, a physical recreation major from Robinson, Kan., for a horseback riding lesson since Jessi's family owns horses and Robyn said she rode horses as a child. "Most of the class had never been on a horse before," Jessi said when two horses visited campus for the adventure.

The Western students also gained teaching experience when St. Joseph's Central High School students joined the class to learn about canoeing, archery, fishing and camping.

"I'm scared to death to fire a gun but I'm excited to try it," Jessi said of the trap shooting adventure.

And that seemed to be the feeling of most of the students – a willingness to try something new so they could eventually teach it to others.

"When we become teachers, we'll be able to teach them and show them things they can do," Robyn said. ■

working together for the past three. "I was feeling like there needed to be an ending to the proposals, and Ken felt that this would give some structure and framework to his class." The two professors decided that the students' projects would have to be for a nonprofit organization that was located in the community or region.

This year, the students are working with Albany Regional Center, Friends of the Animal Shelter, Open Door Food Kitchen, Pass the Power, Second Harvest Food Bank and Soaring Hope Equine Therapy. ■

NEWS Briefs

Graduate programs grow

Western continues to add graduate programs to its curriculum, and the number of participants is growing as well. At the spring commencement ceremony, the first graduate degree recipients will be recognized and hooded.

This fall, a new option for the master of applied science degree, human factors and usability testing, will begin, along with a master of applied arts in written communication degree with options in technical communication and writing studies. Last fall, a total of 65 students were enrolled in four programs. Additionally, graduate courses in TESOL (Teaching English to Students of Other Languages) are being offered on campus and at Western's Northland site in Tuller Plaza in Kansas City, Mo.

Dr. Jeanne Daffron '75, director of graduate studies, said the graduate program is going well and according to the university's plan. Several additional graduate programs will be added over the next two years. "We want to be responsive to the workforce needs in the region," Jeanne said. "We really are looking at applied degrees." ■

New Board of Governors member

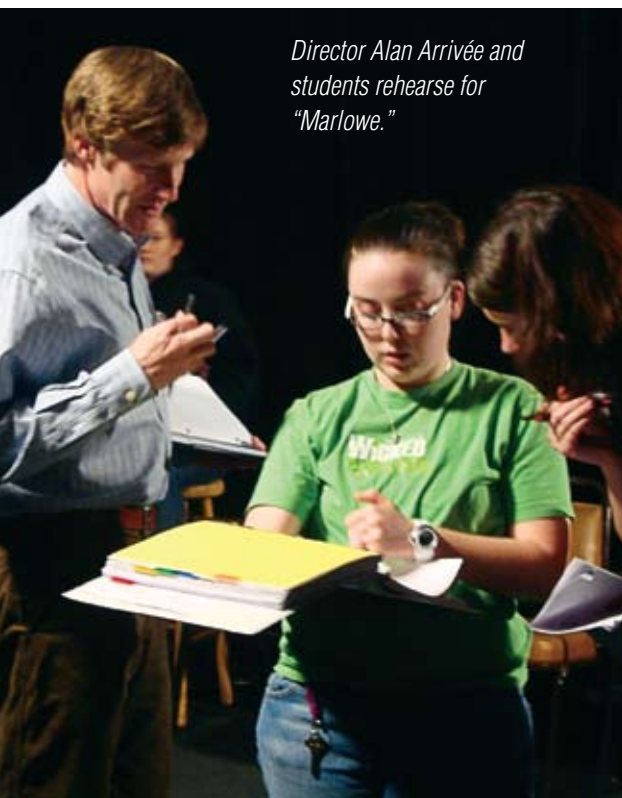
Diza A. Eskridge, of Weston, Mo., was appointed to the Board of Governors by Gov. Jay Nixon.

Diza graduated from the University of Missouri with a bachelor's degree in business administration and then attended summer school at Western to get her teaching certificate.

In addition to teaching school, she took over her family's feed mill operation in 1980. She sold the business in 1993 and later served on the Platte County Commission and as economic development coordinator for the city of Weston. Diza is president of the Weston Historical Museum and serves on the board of the Northland Community Foundation.

Her term will end on Oct. 29, 2014. Diza replaces Janet Leachman, who has served on the board since 2003. ■

Theatre production features professor's work



Director Alan Arrivé and students rehearse for "Marlowe."

Assistant professor of theatre Don Lillie became intrigued with 16th century playwright Christopher Marlowe when he read a newspaper article about him almost 20 years ago. That intrigue led Don to start writing "Marlowe" last year, and the play was performed by Western students on the main stage this past spring.

The play, with a cast of 15 main characters, explores the last days of Marlowe, to whom some attribute William Shakespeare's plays. Don's work is about Marlowe staging a controversial play he had written that questions the legitimacy of the monarchy. He said "Marlowe" explores the questions surrounding the death of Marlowe, who was also suspected as a spy. "It's a suspense - a murder drama with lots of twists and turns," Don said.

Seeing his work performed, he said, was a unique experience for not only him as the playwright, but for the director,

assistant professor of theatre Alan Arrivé; and the students. "This is the purest example of what educational theatre should be," Don said. "Alan and I have a great working relationship, and the students got to see collaboration between two colleagues."

One of the student actors told him it was scary having the playwright attending the practices, but Alan and the students offered suggestions throughout the rehearsal process since the play had never been performed before. "Everyone participated in the creative process," Don said. "It makes it unique to watch this process grow from page to stage."

"Marlowe" is Don's second play. In 2000 he wrote an outdoor drama about the Pony Express that he said he still hopes will someday be performed on the amphitheater at St. Joseph's Krug Park. In the meantime, he said he has several more ideas and plots in mind for future plays. ■

Drum Majors for Justice

Three Drum Majors for Justice were named at the second annual Black Heritage Ball in February: Community – Zulima Lugo-Knapp; Faculty/Staff – Tay Triggs, director of the Center for Multicultural Education (CME); and Western Student – Ivory Duncan.

Zulima, the sponsor of *Aquí-Here* magazine and a part-time instructor of Spanish at Western, is a supporter of multiculturalism and diversity in the St. Joseph community. Her nomination letter stated that she has taken on the task of bridging the gap between the growing Latino/Hispanic community and St. Joseph, as well as being an advocate for those who can't speak for themselves.

Tay came to Western four years ago, and her message to students, faculty and staff was, and still is, to get involved, better yourself, better your community and add value to your relationships.

"It only takes a few minutes interacting with Ms. Triggs to realize that her passion for justice and community is strong," Director of Residential Life Michael Speros said in his nomination letter. "She plays to no special interest groups, only those interested in the betterment of themselves and others."

Ivory, a senior, has worked in the CME since she was a freshman. Through her internship she planned programs focusing on African American leadership,

domestic violence, body image, racial violence and hate, women's history, hunger and homelessness, voter registration/rights and many others.

Ivory took the initiative to coordinate leadership classes for African American students at Bode Middle School and Benton High School in St. Joseph, Mo., as well as self-improvement classes for area teenage girls through Mid-City Excellence. She also created the Society for Distinguished Black Women on campus. ■

Campus Kudos

- EQ Magazine, one of the most respected publications in the recording industry, offered a series of four online recording lessons featuring Anthony Glise, instructor of music. The free lessons address miking techniques when recording traditional classical instruments. Anthony uses the instruments in his progressive rock group, the Nova Project. He was also interviewed by the magazine.
- A team of industry, Department of Defense professionals and academia led by Kent Pickett, assistant professor of computer science, received the Army's FY08 Models and Simulation Award in Acquisition for their work on the Communications Effects Server (CES). CES is a model of the Army's new mobile communications network that makes towers unnecessary.
- Marsha Dolan, associate professor of nursing and coordinator of the Health Information Technology program, received the 2008 Outstanding Community Educator Campaign Award for her work with the Personal Health Record Campaign and involvement with consumer education at the American Health Information Management Association's national convention in Seattle.
- Kathy Kelly, administrative coordinator for the student development office, was featured in the St. Joseph News-Press' "20 Who Count" feature, which highlights people in St. Joseph and surrounding areas who have made a difference in the lives of others. Kathy's involvement with the first community Autism Walk and her work with Alpha Phi Alpha, Inc. fraternity and Alpha Sigma Alpha sorority at Western were recognized.



Dr. Gordon Mapley, dean of the Western Institute, presents Ival Lawhon with a plaque at his last photography class for his 31 years of teaching the class.

Western creates Safe Zone

When graphic designer Steve VanDyke saw information last fall about creating a safe zone for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) community on campus, he knew he had to sign up for the training.

Kelly Glynn, administrative coordinator for housing and residential life, said she, too, immediately signed up for the training because she wants to do her part to maintain a safe and welcome environment for all residence hall students.

Last fall, the center for multicultural education offered a four-hour training session for Safe Zone, a national program that promotes building allies for different communities. This session, which focused on the LGBT community, was conducted by Dr. James Linsin, a psychologist in the counseling center at University of Missouri – St. Louis. The large turnout included students, staff and faculty, as well as St. Joseph community members.

"I was impressed that a wide variety of people attended the training," Steve said. "I was excited to see how many people wanted to get involved."

Steve, who came out when he was 26, said he wishes he would've had such a support system when he was in high school and college. "I didn't have any support when I was questioning, and a lot of kids here don't have that. Even if no one

ever talks to me about it, at least they know the campus supports them," he said. "It's such a positive thing to have on campus."

"No one should feel like they are all alone," Kelly added.

Both Steve and Kelly said they gained a wealth of information and were glad they signed up for the training. They hope more people on campus will participate when it is offered again.

Tay Triggs, director of the center for multicultural education, decided to offer the training specifically to build allies of the LGBT community on campus, not because of any particular incidents, but in an effort to be proactive. Last year, she became the advisor for Pride Alliance on campus, a support group for LGBT students, and she realized many in the group were looking for allies.

"I realize the stereotypes and the biases are out there," she said. "Someone needed to show them it was okay to be themselves and that they have an ally."

Tay also held Safe Zone training in April called Creating a Welcoming Environment for International People. She would like to continue to expand the program to include training for allies for nontraditional students and other minorities.

"We don't have all the answers," Steve said. "We just need to be there to listen." ■

Western's quality is showing

"Accreditation" seems to be the buzzword on campus lately, as the university reached a milestone in its accreditation process and several academic programs have reaffirmed their accreditation recently.

Last fall, an accreditation team from AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) spent two days on campus, and the university is now in the period of review. The report they generated was positive and complimentary and no accreditation issues were identified. "There should be no reason we should not be reaffirmed," said Dr. Jeanie Crain, special assistant to the provost and institutional liaison to the Department of Higher Education in Missouri and the Higher Learning Commission.

The institution is up for reaffirmation of accreditation in 2009-10. The AQIP accreditation process, which Western joined in 2003, promotes continuous quality. Institutions involved in AQIP align their strategic plan with AQIP's Action Projects, and Jeanie said that has been a huge success for Western.

One of the larger reaffirmations of accreditation for Western recently was the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). All departments that offer teaching certificates were involved in the accreditation process, and Western found out last fall that their NCATE accreditation had been reaffirmed.

The social work program also underwent accreditation with the Council on Social Work Education and was notified

last fall that its accreditation has been reaffirmed. Additionally, Western's legal studies program hosted a site visit for accreditation with the American Bar Association this spring.

The Steven L. Craig School of Business has been seeking first-time accreditation with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) since 2005 and hosted a site visit this year.

"It's one thing for institutions to say they have high quality programs, but when that is validated by external institutions, it substantiates that claim," said Dr. Cindy Heider, assistant vice president for academic and student affairs. "Students see that our academic programs meet high standards and in many cases exceed those standards." ■

Incubator gets first tenant

IMULAN BioTherapeutics LLC, an emerging animal health company, announced last fall that it will be the first business tenant in the Christopher S. "Kit" Bond Science and Technology Incubator on campus. The Buchanan County Commissioners signed a letter of intent to provide an incentive package of forgivable and no-interest loans to IMULAN for relocating its headquarters and operations from Prescott, Ariz. to St. Joseph, Mo.

"We welcome IMULAN to Western and to St. Joseph," said Dr. Robert Vartabedian, Western's president. "This is exactly the kind of company the Bond Incubator was built for, and the kind of company we hope to continue to attract.

IMULAN is a perfect match for the strong life sciences industry in St. Joseph."

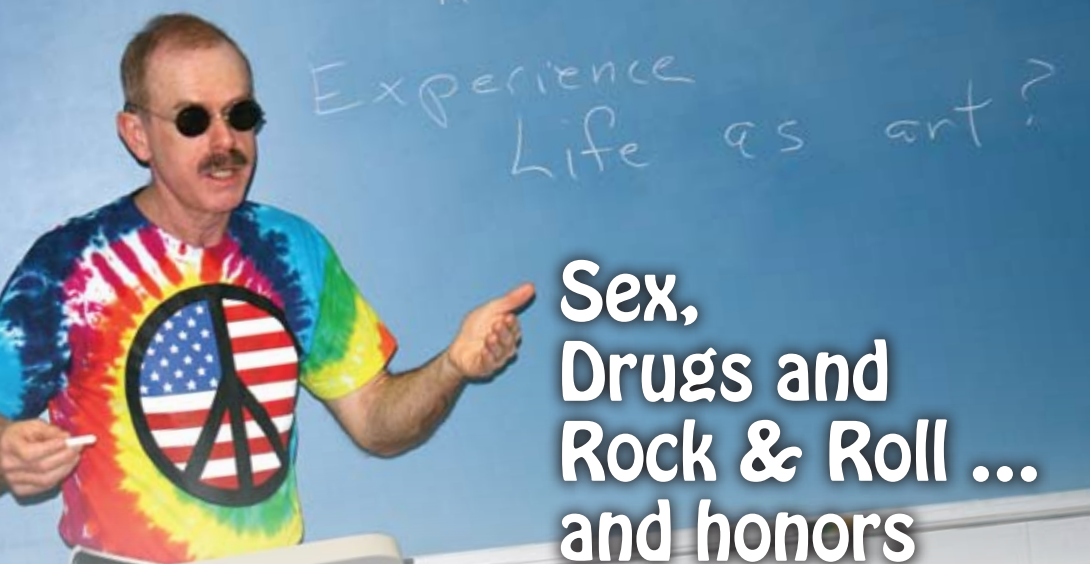
IMULAN cited the concentration of animal health industries in the region as a key factor in the decision to relocate to St. Joseph. The Kansas City Animal Health Corridor, which includes St. Joseph, is home to more than 120 animal health

companies. IMULAN's first commercial product is the only approved treatment aid in the United States for feline leukemia virus and feline immunodeficiency virus.

There is 17,000 sq. feet open for future tenants in the incubator. ■

Graduate students work in a lab in the incubator.





Sex, Drugs and Rock & Roll ... and honors

What do you get when you combine a love of rock and roll and a professor who once played in a well known rock band with a program that develops curriculum from student suggestions? Answer: You get a popular colloquium for honors students this spring – Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll: Exploding the Status Quo. The course is being taught by English instructor Dr. Bill Church (pictured above) and history professor Dr. Dan Trifan, who played bass professionally for 10 years and was a member of the rock band Blood, Sweat and Tears for a little over a year.

Honors student Dustin Strickler said Dr. Elizabeth Latosi-Sawin, director of the honors program, has always encouraged students to offer topic suggestions for colloquia, which are two-hour credit courses for students in the honors program. General honors students are required to take three colloquia throughout their college career, major honors students are required to take six. At least two are offered each semester.

Dustin said when he found out that Dan had played in rock bands in the '60s and '70s, he suggested a colloquium on the history of rock and roll, and everything fell into place to offer it this semester.

"You can't go wrong talking about the '60s," said Lydia Maas, who was excited about taking the class. "I love this fun history."

"The music sucked me in; I love music," said student Jessica McMinn.

"I'm an '80s 'hair band' buff and my stepdad is an old hippie. And Dr. Trifan knows everything."

Dustin suggested another colloquium that was also offered this semester – Applied Sport Psychology: The Mental Side of Greatness, taught by Dr. Bill Russell, assistant professor of physical education. That is the colloquium Dustin chose to enroll in since he was place kicker for the Griffons for four seasons. "This is the most fun in academics I've ever had," he said. "It's amazing that you can create this on this campus."

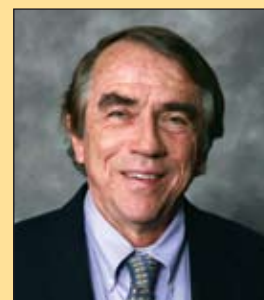
A third colloquium offered this semester was Loving Genes and Genies: Genetic Engineering for Everyone, taught by Dr. Murray Nabors, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

"We try to meet the needs of different students," said Elizabeth. "The colloquia give you curricular flexibility that serves the intellectual interests of both students and faculty." She said past colloquia have included The Science in Science Fiction, Music and Spirituality, and Election Law. "I wish something like this would have been available to me when I was an undergraduate."

"This is my favorite colloquium by far. I've always loved the music and I'm fascinated by the era," said Kayla Kelder, a student in Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll. "The honors classes aren't easy by any means, but they are really worth the effort. You gain so much general knowledge of the world around you." ■

NEWS Briefs

New LAS dean



Dr. Murray Nabors

Dr. Murray Nabors began his duties as dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences last fall, replacing Dr. Martin

Johnson, who retired after a 36-year career at Western.

Murray, a native of Oklahoma, earned a bachelor of science in biology at Yale College in New Haven, Conn., and a Ph.D in botany from Michigan State University. Before joining Western, he served as the chair of the department of biology at the University of Mississippi in Oxford from 2003 to 2007. He was head of the department of biology at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va., for four years, and he served Colorado State University in Fort Collins for 21 years, holding several positions.

Murray said he researched Western before applying for the position, and one of the things that attracted him was the university's focus on applied learning. Along with his duties as dean, he is teaching an honors colloquium this semester – Loving Genes and Genies: Genetic Engineering for Everyone.

He said he and his family like St. Joseph. Three daughters and one son moved here with his wife, Adriana, and him, and he has two other adult sons.

"I'm really happy to be here. I like the variety of things I do and the variety of people I meet." ■

JOHN'S JOURNEY

Western student John Manyok's life can get pretty stressful at times, since the father of two works full time and goes to school full time. He said, however, that the stress rarely bothers him. And when it does, all he has to do is think about his childhood. John is a **Lost Boy of Sudan**, one of more than 27,000 boys who were displaced and/or orphaned during the Sudanese civil war from 1983-2005. "When I get bogged down now, I look back on what I went through and I think, 'this is a cup of water.'"

Home in Sudan

Before his village in southern Sudan was attacked when he was six, John remembers happy times. It was the village boys, some as young as four, who took care of their families' goats and cows, he said, and every day, he and the other boys would lead the livestock outside of the village to graze.

That daily chore saved his life. The young boys were away from the village when it was attacked by forces from northern Sudan. He lost his family and hasn't seen his Sudanese home since. **At age six, John became a refugee**, dubbed a Lost Boy by aid organizations.

The Journey Begins: Panyidu Camp, Ethiopia

His first refugee camp was Panyidu Camp in Ethiopia, a two-month trek from his home in Sudan. That journey, which many made barefoot, began what John calls his "jungle life."

"You don't have goals. You just live to survive that day," he explained. "You couldn't think about your mom and how she cooked. We'd say to each other, 'don't think about your mom. Don't think about your dad telling you history.'" **Those children who couldn't stop thinking about what they had lost**, John said, **usually didn't survive.**

Many also died from unsanitary water and lack of food since the refugees were in Panyidu two months before humanitarian aid arrived. **"Then we were able to eat two times a day!"** John said. **"We had milk!"**

In 1991, after living four years in Ethiopia, the refugees were forced to leave when the Ethiopian government was overthrown. As they left the camp, the Ethiopian military attacked them, forcing the boys to jump in the River Gilo. "A lot of boys won't talk about it," John said. And when he tells the story, he gets the sense that a lot of people don't really believe something that terrible really happened. **"The river killed a lot of people. If you couldn't swim, you died."**

Pochalla Camp, Sudan, and Kakuma Camp, Kenya

John returned to Sudan and lived at Pochalla Camp for 11 months where he helped clear land so that food could be air dropped by the United Nations.

Then it was another month's walk to the Kenyan border where they boarded buses to their next destination – Kakuma Camp in Kenya, where he lived from 1992 to 2001.

At Kakuma, John remembers "black days" and "bright days." He explained that the boys were each given one kilo of corn, one cup of beans and about a ½ cup of oil, and that was supposed to last 14 days. "We ate once a day for seven days, then we had to reduce our amount. The 'bright days' were at the beginning of the 14 days when we got our new food ration. **The 'black days' were at the end of the 14 days when we ran out of food.**"

beautiful life

United States of America

Between 2000 and 2005, approximately 5,000 Lost Boys came to the United States, and John, who had spent almost his entire life in refugee camps, joined them in 2001 at the age of 21.

He ended up in Omaha, Neb. For the first month, he shared a house in a high-crime neighborhood with 15 other Lost Boys before a local church stepped in to offer assistance and mentoring. From then on, John refers to life in the United States as the “beautiful life.”

After he earned his GED (he attended school in the refugee camps), John earned a surgical technology degree from Nebraska Methodist College. He came to St. Joseph in 2006 and got a job working as a surgical technologist at Heartland Health.

He wasn't at the hospital very long before a friend encouraged him to continue his education at Western, and he enrolled for the Fall 2007 semester. “She (his friend) said, ‘If there’s a way (to go to college), will you do it? Do you have a commitment?’ and I said, ‘I’ll do my best.’”

John’s first semester found him in the library when it opened in the morning and when it closed at night, and with a 4.0 GPA at semester’s end. “People say I am crazy and that I work too hard. **But freedom is about working hard.** There is no freedom without sacrifice.”

In addition to his current hospital work, John had worked

in a position similar to a nurse’s assistant at Kakuma, and he hopes to pursue a career in the medical field. His ultimate goal is to become a doctor. “I got this far because someone helped me,” John said. **“So I want to help people. I have to help. I have to do something.”**

John, who recently became a U.S. citizen, does not regret his experiences as a Lost Boy. “I look back at what I went through and say I’m glad I went through that. **It made me strong.** Sometimes life takes you some place different.”

And his journey continues. ■



John and his family

A push for international students

Dr. Robert Vartabedian, Western’s president, recently delivered a gift to the international student office – a giant map of the world and a box of push pins to mark the homelands of the university’s international students. The map reflects his commitment to increasing the number of international students at Western.

Huey Shi Chew, international student coordinator, wants to increase the number of pins on the map, as well. Last fall, she journeyed to China where she attended an international conference in Beijing and made contact with a university in Chengdu in the Sichuan Province. She said a two-plus-two agreement is currently in the works with Sichuan Normal University, where Chinese students could complete general

studies requirements in their homeland and then attend Western to complete their degree.

When she was first hired in the spring of 2008, Huey Shi’s immediate tasks included getting structures in place to better accommodate international students. Now that some of those have been established, she is hoping to develop an international students club and begin planning activities.

But her goal doesn’t stop with the students – Huey Shi wants to enhance collaboration between international faculty members, too. “We have a great resource in our international faculty, and they are willing to help and support the students,” she said. “Having international faculty is a plus.” ■

hard

A four-year kick

Michelle Polk, a finance major who will graduate this spring, holds a title that no one can match. She is the only person to play on Western's soccer team for all of its first four years.

Michelle, from Buckeye, Ariz., was one of four freshmen (the rest were transfer students) recruited by the program's first coach, Chad Wiggins. As a high school senior, she had already visited four other universities and had pretty much made her selection, she said, but she loved Western's campus and decided to join the team. "The new program made me more willing to come. It made me hopeful."



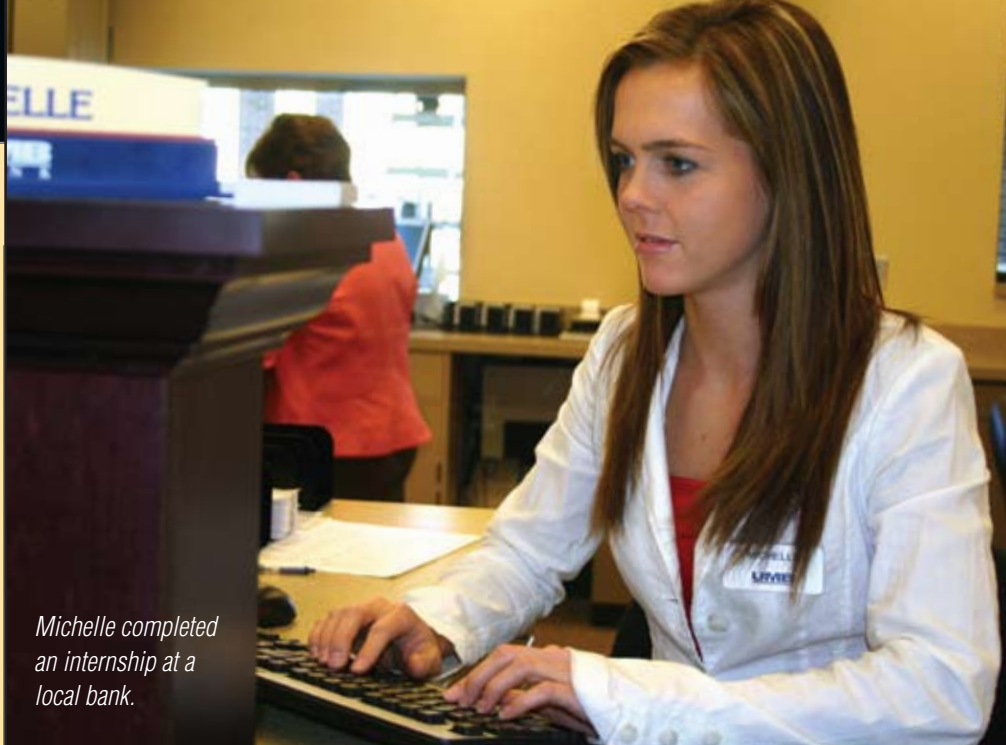
Unfortunately, it was more difficult than she thought it would be. "The first year was really hard. Everyone had to learn how to play with each other. Just trying

to get everyone to match their playing style was hard," Michelle said.

After the first season, which was played on the city soccer fields, two of the four freshmen originally recruited left the team, and Michelle considered playing somewhere else as well. She requested a release to talk to other schools, but she eventually decided to return as a sophomore.

By the second season, the team was playing on the new turf in Spratt Memorial Stadium, but not winning many

Michelle completed an internship at a local bank.



matches, and Michelle again requested a release at season's end. The only other freshman that was recruited with Michelle quit because of injuries.

But Michelle decided to play through at Western. "I loved the girls; we were like a small family." Also, she said, both her older sister and older brother played a sport in college for one year and transferred back home, and she wanted to break that tradition. "I'm a very stubborn person," she said with a laugh.

Now, as she's ready to graduate, Michelle, who was chosen as team captain her senior year, is glad she stayed. "It's a relief to not wake up at 5 a.m. and go to practice, but I'm really going to miss the competition, and I'm going to miss the girls."

She also enjoyed her classroom experience. "I love my teachers. The business department (Craig School of Business) provides you with a lot of different opportunities and I'm getting a great education."

"Michelle was definitely a leader," said Jeff Hansen, who took over as head coach in the program's second year. "She will be successful in whatever she chooses to do."

Jeff said the team's experience is pretty common for a new program, and that their record is typical for Western's conference. He noted that last season, his team played eight games against four conference teams that made it to the national tournament.

"This program's on the right track," Jeff said. "You look at the records and think we're not getting better, but we are getting better. It's only a matter of time."

"I'm glad I made the decision to come to Missouri Western," Michelle said. "The friendships I've made and the challenges I've learned to overcome will never be forgotten." ■

Griffon softball rocks!

This season, the softball team, 35-6 at press time, garnered a 32-game winning streak, a school and conference record. As we went to press they were ranked 21st in their division nationally, and fifth in the NCAA South Central Regional ranking.

Alumnus named head coach at ISU

A goal of Paul Rhoads '89, became a reality in December when he was named head football coach at Division I Iowa State University in Ames. He had been the defensive coordinator at Auburn University before he was hired to lead the Cyclones.

"It's an exciting time for us," Paul said of his family. "I've been working my whole career toward being a head football coach."

After graduating from Western with an economics degree, Paul was a graduate assistant at Utah State University, where he earned a master of education degree in 1991. He was a graduate assistant at The Ohio State University, an assistant coach and pass game coordinator at Pacific University, and assistant coach at Iowa State University. He served at



Paul Rhoads '89

University of Pittsburgh from 2000-2007 before joining Auburn.

For Paul, the move to central Iowa was extra special; not only because he was returning to a place where he had coached before, but also because he was moving back home. "I can get to every member of my family in 25 minutes or less," said Paul, who grew up near Ames in Ankeny, Iowa.

It's been all about football Paul's entire life, as his dad, Cecil, was a high school football coach for more than 30 years. "I knew I wanted to play collegiate and I wanted to be a high school coach, but once I got into my career I aspired to coach college football," Paul said.

It was the suite-style living, the coaching staff and a Presidential scholarship that made Paul decide to play football for the Griffons. "It was an up-

and-down career (including two broken arms) but still very fulfilling." The former Griffon free safety and tight end said he still keeps in touch with several players, but unfortunately, his career has never allowed him to attend any of Western's games.

Paul said he also had a great classroom experience as a student at Western. "I got to know all my professors," he said. "That's important in achieving a great education."

But his best memory of Western? "That's easy – meeting my wife, Vickie."

Vickie (Miles) '91, was a basketball player for Western, and Paul said head athletic trainer Myron Unzicker played Cupid for him. "He gave me the insight and background on Vickie." The couple has two sons, Jacob and Wyatt.

"My memories of St. Joseph are very fond. I don't get down there very much, but when I do, it always puts a smile on my face." ■

Join Gold Coat!

The 2009-2010 Gold Coat Club Membership Drive is underway! With facility improvements on the horizon, coupled with the current success on the field, in the classroom and in the community, now is a great time to become part of Griffon Athletics! By contributing to the Gold Coat Club, you will make a difference! For membership information click on Gold Coat Club at www.gogriffons.com or call the athletics department at 816-271-5904. ■

Student athletes honored

Griffon Athletics honored 212 student athletes for outstanding academic achievement on Student Athlete Honors Night when Griffon Basketball hosted Missouri Southern Feb. 7. For the Spring 2008 and Fall 2008 semesters, 100 student athletes were recognized as members of the Athletics Directors Honor Roll for recording a semester GPA of 3.00-3.49. Additionally, 70 student athletes were named to the Dean's List for achieving a semester GPA of 3.50-3.99 and 32 student athletes were named to the President's Honor Roll for achieving a semester GPA of 4.00. ■

**For a complete
schedule and information
on away tailgates and
promotional dates, visit
Griffon Athletics at
www.gogriffons.com.**

Western names new volleyball coach

Cory Frederick became the sixth head volleyball coach in Western history, replacing Tiffany Mastin who resigned last November. Cory, who was assistant volleyball coach at Western from 2001 to 2003, returns after five seasons as the Park University Pirates men's volleyball coach.

"The philosophy of putting students first is the main reason for my interest in returning," said Cory. "I truly enjoyed my time with everyone across campus. It's a wonderful work environment with great faculty, staff and



Cory Frederick

administration. I'm looking forward to helping the team get back to a competitive level in the MIAA, which is one of the top conferences in the country."

Cory guided the Pirates to the 2008 NAIA men's volleyball national championship and a 29-1 overall record last season. He holds the Pirates' best all-time winning percentage for volleyball with a 105-16 overall record.

In his first four seasons at Park, Cory led the Pirates to four straight NAIA National Tournaments, including a national runner-up finish in 2007,

recording the school's first 30-win season in more than a decade and the first since only varsity matches were counted toward the overall record.

Cory earned his undergraduate degree in biology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1998, where he competed in NIRSA Division I club volleyball. In addition, he completed his formal certification in cytotechnology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., in 2000. He coached the girl's program at Fridley (Minn.) High School in 2000.

He and his wife, Becky, reside in Parkville, Mo., with their daughter, Sarah. ■

Student athletes spread cheer

For the sixth consecutive year, Griffon student athletes spread lots of holiday cheer to area residents who are less fortunate through the annual Griffs Giving Gifts program. The program, spearheaded by the student athlete advisory committee (SAAC), raises money throughout the holiday season to adopt area families for Thanksgiving and Christmas. In all, student athletes raised \$1,000 in a three-week period and were able to adopt six families: four received a Thanksgiving feast complete with all the trimmings and two families received an assortment of gifts for adults and young children for Christmas.

"The participation from the community of St. Joseph was excellent this year," said co-president Shannon Pivovar. "We raised a lot of funds for needy families in a short period of time. The smiles on



the families' faces when we went to their homes made everything worthwhile to know we were able to provide some holiday cheer."

"This group worked very hard and I am proud of them for what they accomplished," said Eric Kramer, Western's NCAA compliance and academic coordinator. "It's great that our student athletes understand the importance of giving back to our local community."

The SAAC is comprised of student athletes from all Griffon sports teams to provide insight on the student athlete experience, offer input on the rules, regulations and policies that affect student athletes' lives on NCAA member institutions campuses and to engage in various community service projects. ■

Griffon basketball update

Although the final record may not show it, **men's basketball**, coached by Tom Smith, took major strides in returning to the upper tier of the MIAA. MIAA Conference play was highlighted by four road wins: Fort Hays State, where the Griffons hadn't won since the 1981-82 season; Northwest Missouri State, the first win in Maryville since the 2001-2002 season; Pittsburg State; and Nebraska-Omaha. The team was playing its best basketball at the right time headed into March, and they qualified for the post-season MIAA tournament in Kansas City, Mo.

At the tournament, the Griffons knocked off the first and fourth seeds to play in the championship game.

Senior guard **Lonnell Johnson**, St. Louis, averaged 14.3 points per game which ranked 13th in the league in points per game including a season high 25 against Missouri Southern. Lonnell also led the MIAA in steals at 2.5 per game. Sophomore forward **Dominique Thuston**, St. Joseph, Mo., averaged 14.2 points per game which put him 14th in the league. Dominique was named MIAA Player of the Week twice as he scored more than 20 points in three out of four games including a high of 26 against Henderson State. Senior **Leonard Parker**, Leavenworth, Kan., led the league in assists at 5.15 per game.

A season of adjustment was on the horizon for **women's basketball** as they began the schedule with a young squad. In January the Griffons lost three conference games by four points or less, but in February they won four of their first five games. All five starters scored in double figures when they beat Northwest

Missouri State. Unfortunately, the season ended with a loss to Southwest Baptist, eliminating the Griffon women's bid to the post-season conference tournament.

The eight steals of sophomore **Tierra Ford**, Kansas City, Mo., against Indiana University of Pennsylvania on Nov. 28, 2008 was the single best performance of any player in the MIAA in 2008-09. She went on to record two seven-steal games. The six blocked shots against Emporia State on Jan. 28 by sophomore **Rachel Luteyn**, Fond du Lac, Wis., tied the top mark in the league in that category.

Guard **Jessica Koch**, Kansas City, Mo., was named MIAA Freshman of the Year as voted on by the league's coaches. Academically Koch is a sophomore, but a season-ending knee injury after only four games in the 2007-2008 season garnered her freshman status. Jessica led the Griffons in scoring with 12.3 points per game and assists at 3.7 per game. She made a difficult switch midseason, moving from off guard to the point position, a move which helped the Griffons win four of five games in early February. Jessica led the Griffons in scoring 10 times. The women are coached by Lynn Plett. ■



Senior Guard Lonnell Johnson

NEWS Briefs

Women's basketball hosts alumni game

Lots of familiar faces were back in the fieldhouse in January when women's basketball held their first alumni game as part of the basketball alumni weekend. In all, 27 former players and former coach Dave Slifer returned, and 15 players took part in the game. The players were recognized at halftime of the game against University of Central Missouri that evening, held a meet and greet with the current team in between the men's and women's games and closed the festivities with a reception at La Dolce Vita at 36th Street Restaurant. The event was organized by Griffon assistant Carly Lee '05. Former players interested in being a part of next year's festivities may contact her at 816-271-4481. ■

Allen named 1st Team All-American; invited to combine

Senior offensive lineman Roger Allen, Raytown, Mo., capped off his four-year Griffon career by being named a First-Team selection on both the AFCA Division II Coaches All-America Team and the AP Little All-America Team. Roger was the anchor of a Griffon offense that averaged 354 yards of total offense a game and scored 27.4 points per game in 2008. He started all 48 games during his four seasons in a Griffon uniform.

Roger led his team to four straight post-season appearances and helped Western win a school record nine games three out of the past four seasons (2005, 2006 and 2007). He helped the Griffons to a combined 33-15 record over his four years, which is the winningest four-year class in Griffon history. Roger was invited to play in the third annual Texas vs. The Nation Division II All-Star Game in El Paso, Texas, and was also invited to the NFL Combine in February in Indianapolis. ■



Achieving Greatness

Western's Achieving Greatness capital campaign is well underway and close to its goal of \$15 million. To date, \$14.2 million has been raised, 95 percent of the goal.

Of the four components of the campaign – Craig School of Business (\$5.5 million), mission endowment (\$1 million), emerging needs (\$1 million), and construction and renovation of Remington and Agenstein Halls (\$7.5 million) – the first three have met or exceeded the goals, and nearly \$1.1 million is needed to meet the goal for the construction of Remington Hall and renovation of Agenstein Hall.

"Given the current economy, we're excited that donors have seen the merits of the campaign's projects and have made it successful," said Jerry Pickman '85, director of development. "We are grateful for their generosity."



Jerry noted that three major gifts to the campaign – \$5.5 million (Steven Craig), \$5 million (Wes and Patsy '79, Remington) and \$1 million (anonymous donor) – help mark the success of the campaign, but he said other statistics also show how successful the campaign has been so far.

For example, Western achieved 100 percent participation from the MWSU Board of Governors, the MWSU Foundation Board of Directors and the President's Cabinet.

Additionally, 50 percent of donors to the campaign contributed more than their

total lifetime giving on record, and nearly 30 percent were first-time donors. As reported in the Fall 2008 issue of the Western Magazine, more than 76 percent of university employees contributed more than \$200,000 to the campaign.

"Those statistics make us very proud. They speak loudly of the widespread support Western has received throughout this campaign," Jerry said.

Recent campaign gifts include \$600,000 for scholarships from the estate of Marie Fulkerson, and \$27,857 for scholarships and equipment for Remington Hall from the estates of Herb and Peggy Iffert (see articles on next page).

The Achieving Greatness campaign is the private fundraising component of Western's Beyond Excellence Initiative, an investment of private and public funds to enhance the university's mission. Public funding includes \$30.1 million from the state's Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative for the renovation of Evan R. Agenstein Hall and construction of Remington Hall, an addition to Agenstein Hall that will nearly double its square footage; and a \$2.5 million grant from the Economic Development Administration for the construction of the Christopher S. "Kit" Bond Science and Technology Incubator (completed in May 2008). ■

Director of Development Jerry Pickman '85, noted that there are several naming opportunities available for donors of the Agenstein/Remington Halls project:

- Chemistry Studies Center \$1 million
- Biology Studies Center \$1 million
- Equipment Fund \$1 million
- Atrium \$500,000
- Level 1 Wing (West) \$250,000
- Greenhouse \$100,000
- Lecture Halls \$100,000
- Laboratories \$ 50,000
- Classrooms \$ 25,000

For information about naming opportunities or to contribute to the Achieving Greatness campaign, call Jerry at 816-271-5648.



Remington Hall construction continues on schedule. The planned completion date is December 2009.

Centenarian supporter bequeaths scholarships

Marie Fulkerson, a great supporter of Western, died Jan. 6, 2009, at the age of 108, and the MWSU Foundation received a gift of \$600,000 from Marie's estate to establish two \$300,000 endowed scholarships.

The scholarships, named the A.B. DeMuth Business Award and the A.B. DeMuth Business Award in honor of Lyman M. Fulkerson, will award up to 75 percent of tuition and room and board for on-campus students, and up to 100 percent of tuition for off-campus students. The scholarships are available to graduates of high schools in Buchanan, Andrew and Holt Counties. The students must be full-time sophomores, juniors or seniors with a declared major in business, demonstrate financial need and possess a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or higher.

"Marie recognized the value of a partnership between the university and the community, and we truly appreciate her generosity," said Dan Nicoson, vice president for university advancement and executive director of the MWSU

Foundation. "Her gifts will benefit students and the community for many years to come."

Additionally, a substantial gift from Marie funded a large portion of the cost of the construction of the university's banquet and conference center that was completed in 2005. The facility, named the Fulkerson Center, was named for Marie and her husband, Lyman.

Marie was born Nov. 17, 1900, the daughter of Oliver and Sophia DeMuth. Originally from Nebraska, she moved to St. Joseph as a young woman and began working in the DeMuth Supply Company with her uncle, who founded the company in 1881. She married Lyman Fulkerson in 1932, and they assumed ownership of the business in 1949, selling it in 1972. Lyman died in 1973. ■

Long-time supporters remember Western

The MWSU Foundation was recently notified that Herb '35, and Peggy Iffert, two of Western's most ardent supporters, named the university in their will. Their estate was placed in a charitable trust to benefit Western and their church. The total amount placed in the trust was approximately \$4 million. The MWSU Foundation will receive 65 percent of the income generated by the trust annually and these funds will be used to establish two endowed scholarships, one for business students and one for biology students.

"These types of gifts are very special," said Jerry Pickman '85, director of development. "Throughout their lifetimes, Herb and Peggy developed a love for Western and a philanthropic spirit, and to know that they remembered the university in their wills means a lot to Western."

Peggy, who attended the Junior College for a brief period, was a 22-year member of the Alumni Association Board of Directors and an active volunteer. She had a long career as a nurse and had established a nursing scholarship several years ago. She died Nov. 28, 2007.

Herb, who was vice president of finance for St. Joseph Light and Power, was also an active volunteer for Western and had served as a member of MWSU Foundation Board of Directors. He died Jan. 28, 2008. ■



“If we build a training camp, they will come.”



When athletic director Dave Williams made that statement last fall, “we” referred to Western and “they” referred to the Kansas City Chiefs. And if everything falls into place, the Chiefs will move their annual three-week training camp from River Falls, Wis., to campus in August 2010. Western would have first option to sign a new five-year contract to host the training camp, followed by a series of five one-year options.

“This is a great moment in our history,” said Dr. Robert Vartabedian, president. “The possibilities to the university and community are endless.”

A few years back, Western met with Chiefs personnel several times, trying to negotiate moving the camp to St. Joseph. But that prospect seemed to die out and it wasn’t brought up again in public view until last fall.

In December, the Missouri Development Finance Board (MDFB) approved a request from the Jackson County Sports Authority for \$25 million in tax credits in exchange for making

COACHES OFFICES
MEETING ROOMS
LECTURE ROOMS
LOCKER ROOMS / RESTROOMS
TRAINING / WEIGHT ROOMS
CIRCULATION AND SUPPORT SPACE

\$50 million worth of improvements to Arrowhead Stadium, the Chiefs' Kansas City home. That tax credit package included a provision that the Chiefs would donate \$10 million to Western for facility improvements and move their camp to St. Joseph. State officials gave final approval to the plan in January.

Dr. Vartabedian credited State Sen. Charlie Shields; Dirck Clark '85, chair of Western's Board of Governors; and Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder, chair of the MDFB; for their involvement in the project.

In addition to the \$10 million from the Chiefs/MDFB, Western's monetary commitment to bring the Chiefs training camp to Western is \$5.7 million. The City of St. Joseph committed \$2.25 million and Buchanan County committed \$1.5 million in February. Additionally, \$1.2 million will come from bonds issued from the Max Experience student fees. Western is relying on private contributions to fund the balance, \$750,000, and a fund-raising campaign is underway.

The \$15.7 million will fund an indoor practice facility with a full-size field, an adjacent support building that includes a locker room, weight room, classrooms and offices; a new parking lot; and start-up needs, such as

architect fees and equipment. Two outdoor grass practice fields will also be built. Ellison-Auxier Architects, Inc. has been selected to design and provide construction oversight for the indoor practice facility.

The facility is slated to be built west of Spratt Memorial Stadium where the softball field and a parking lot now stand, so the cost of a new softball field is also included in the \$15.7 million project. If funding is indeed secured, construction on the practice facility will begin this summer.

Western and the St. Joseph community would have access to the facility year-round except for the three weeks of training camp. The locker room would be utilized by the football team, and its current locker room in the Baker Family Fitness Center would be used by visiting football teams and Western's women's soccer team.

A \$4 million fund-raising campaign for a separate set of projects that are not required by the Chiefs for the training camp is also underway. Those projects include a new press box and stadium club, suites, a new score board and a new sound system in the stadium.

"We want the image of Western to be as positive as possible," said Dan Nicoson, vice president for university advancement. "The additional projects are a logical part of the Chiefs endeavor; it relates to the image of the city and the university."

continued on page 18

Photo courtesy of Indianapolis Colts



Gijon Robinson – playin' in the big league

Gijon Robinson has an inside scoop on an NFL professional football team. The four-year player for the Griffons played last season as a tight end for the Indianapolis Colts, the first Griffon to play in a regular-season NFL game.

Last fall, Gijon's first NFL appearance was against the Chicago Bears in September, and he started in 14 out of 15 games for the Colts. His career best game was against the Cincinnati Bengals when he received six passes for 69 yards in December, going 19 for 166 for the season. The Colts' record was 12-4.

"It definitely is a great experience playing with this caliber of guys. I had a really good time," he said.

Gijon said there are some differences between playing in college and playing pro. He said he goes up against a lot bigger guys in the NFL, and the team spends a lot of time on game preparation. "NFL is all about preparation. It's pretty tough – a lot of practice, a lot of films, a lot of meetings." Gijon said the team works almost every day from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. "It's definitely a business."

Another difference that surprised him was the "revolving door," he said. "It's hard to build relationships. Guys come and go and sometimes don't stay long." But the door remained open for Gijon; he returned to the Colts in March to begin preparing for the 2009 season.

At Western, Gijon participated in 47 games as a tight end, and he was named first-team, All-MIAA his junior year. Gijon caught 83 passes for 1,057 yards and seven touchdowns as a Griffon. "I definitely enjoyed being a Griffon. I had a great time with a lot of great guys."

Several NFL scouts watched him play his senior season, and the following spring, Gijon was invited to the NFL Combine, where NFL coaches gather each year to get a good look at prospective new players. He signed with the Colts as a free agent in April 2007 and spent the 2007 season on the Colts practice squad.

"It's exciting," Gijon said of his professional football career. "I'm doing good things in the NFL; I'm doing the best I can." ■

Walt Wilson '76 – from Griffon to Chief

Walt Wilson '76, said he remembers talk of the Chiefs training camp moving to Western back when he was a student. Thirty-three years later, he is ecstatic that it is finally going to happen. "It's absolutely excellent. I think it's going to be a great relationship for the university and the Chiefs."

For Walt, the idea that the Chiefs will be training at his alma mater is extra special because he was the first Griffon to sign a professional contract with the Chiefs. He trained with the Chiefs all summer after graduating from Western but got cut after the first preseason game that fall.

"I was proud to have had that opportunity. I learned so much," Walt said. "I really became a fan of the Chiefs when I tried out for the team." The St. Louis native said he has always been a Rams fan, from the time they played in Los Angeles. "Now I cheer for both teams," he said with a laugh.

Walt went on to compete in several pro football organizations, including the Canadian and World Football Leagues, but never landed a permanent job with them. "My performance with the Chiefs opened eyes in their organization regarding the caliber of student athletes that come out of Missouri Western," he said. "And the university still maintains that tradition today."

Walt, today a senior training supervisor for AmerenUE in St. Louis, played football two-and-a-half years at University of Missouri – Columbia and one year at a junior college before transferring to Western as a senior.

"Missouri Western was such a good fit. It was more of what I was looking for and it had a large effect on me."

He had a great season at Western to close out his college football career. He and his teammates were the first team to go to a bowl game (they won, 44-0) and they set many individual and team records that still stand today. Three of the four seniors on the Griffon's 1975 team tried out for professional football teams. The team was inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame in 2005.

"I think the Chiefs will be very happy at Missouri Western for a long time," he said. ■



Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder looks on as Dirck Clark '85, chair of the Western Board of Governors, speaks at a press conference announcing a letter of agreement with the Chiefs for their training camp to move to campus in 2010.

Chiefs draft Western for training camp *continued*

Plans have been underway for several months to build a baseball stadium on campus with the idea of eventually moving the softball field near it. But since moving the softball field is part of the Chiefs project, a new complex for both baseball and softball with a parking lot is now in the works. Funding for the baseball stadium is provided as part of the bonds issued from the Max Experience.

Students approved a \$5 per credit hour Max Experience fee in 2006 to pay for upgrading athletic facilities and providing other student benefits related to athletics. The fees have already paid for the new turf in Spratt Stadium and a new arena floor.

The Max Experience bonds total \$5 million: \$1.2 million will fund the Chiefs project, \$1.2 million will fund the baseball stadium, and \$2.6 million is being used for upgrades to Spratt Stadium, such as new visitors' bleachers and a building on the visitors' side for a concession stand and restrooms.

Dan noted that it is estimated that 5,000 fans will attend the Chiefs' practices each day during the training camp, which will be a huge economic impact on the community.

"The response in the community has been overwhelmingly positive. People appreciate the huge impact and the overall importance to the region," Dan said. "I think it's one of the most exciting things that has happened to St. Joseph and Buchanan County, and it's exciting that Western is going to have what will be one of the best NCAA Division II athletic complexes in the country."

"The combination of the facilities and the presence of the Chiefs will have a very positive effect on the overall visibility of the university, on student recruitment and even faculty and staff recruitment," Dan added.

"Missouri Western State University definitely deserves these improvements," the lieutenant governor said. "We're very excited about the great partnership developing between the Kansas City Chiefs and the university." ■



From the Alumni Association President



Gregory VerMulm '89

Faithful, Proud and True.

Last February, I sent an e-mail message to our St. Joseph area alumni, urging them to show their support of the Kansas City Chiefs and Missouri Western partnership by signing an online petition on the KKJO radio website. Twenty-four hours later, the number of signatures had increased

from 300 to more than 400 with a number of signees indicating that they were proud Missouri Western alumni.

Also in February, Colleen Kowich, our director of alumni services, put out a call for volunteers to assist with a student networking luncheon. Sixteen alumni – the maximum number needed – volunteered within two postings of this request. Many others offered to help.

Zach Ramsay '02, co-chair of the student involvement committee, began contacting alumni in January to make presentations during Senior Fair which was held April 4. Everyone he asked was interested and offered their assistance, from making educational presentations, to welcoming new graduates, to collecting their contact information. Regional chapter volunteers from St. Louis, Kansas City, Mo., and Springfield, Mo., made the journey back to campus so they could meet with graduates who are moving to those areas after graduation.

I am astounded each day by the number of alumni who willingly offer us their help and their support for the university. Over the next few months, I may be asking those alumni who live in Missouri to mobilize yet again. As Dr. Vartabedian addresses in his column, the state of funding for higher education in Missouri is at an all time low. We may need your help as faithful, proud and true alumni of Missouri Western to lobby your legislators. We, as alumni, are a powerful voice; and, as evidenced by the above actions, we are willing to help each other, our students, and our alma mater. We are proud graduates of Missouri Western and I thank you for your support and dedication.

Faithful, proud and true,

Greg VerMulm '89
President
Alumni Association

Faithful, proud and true – Zack Workman '74

Zack Workman '74, never misses an opportunity to spread the good news of Western, especially Western athletics. The former Griffon football player (tight end, punter and wide receiver) and member of the athletic department's Hall of Fame has been a board member of the Gold Coat Club athletic boosters since 1992 and has served as its president for the past six years.

"Western is like a family to me. It has always been my home. The best friendships I have are a result of my days on the campus, both in the past and today," Zack said. "I have a great appreciation and love for the athletic department."

Growing up in an "athletic family" with five brothers, Zack, from King City, Mo., was recruited as a Griffon when the football team was only a year old and under the helm of Coach Harold Cagle. For his first semester in the fall of 1970, the team lived together in the old YMCA building downtown while the residence halls were being built.

Today he is amazed at how much the campus has grown and changed. But one thing that hasn't changed, he said, is the coaches' attitudes toward their players. "They took care of us and made sure we had a good experience, and that hasn't changed."

As a student athlete, he remembers Gold Coat Club members attending games and encouraging the team (Gold Coat began in 1969), and he's happy to play that role today for the current players. He tells the student athletes that they should carry on the tradition of support and plan to give back in the future. "Back then someone supported us. We support our athletes today so they can be successful and then come back and help others in turn."

Zack owns Lawns Unlimited in Cameron, Mo., and his company has been a part of several projects on campus, including planting many trees and building the Chris Faros Pavilion, named in memory of one of Zach's teammates.

Since he's been president of the Gold Coat Club, his main focus has been on reaching out to alumni athletes and encouraging them to come back to campus and to athletic events. However, he is quick to credit Gold Coat board members and others for the club's success.

Zack and his wife, Mary, have two daughters, a son-in-law and a granddaughter.

"My love for Missouri Western goes back many, many years and for whatever I have done or been a part of, it has been a pleasure for me. It's so much fun to be a part of athletics." ■

Editor's note: We will be spotlighting a "Faithful, Proud and True" alumnus/alumna in each issue of the Western Magazine. If you would like to nominate someone for this feature, please email me at holtz@missouriwestern.edu or call 816-271-5651. Nominations will be reviewed by Alumni Services Director Colleen Kowich and me, with preference given to those alumni who regularly and routinely "give back" to Western.

Alumnus wins second Grammy

Charles Bruffy '81, is two for two. The artistic director of the Phoenix Chorale, artistic director of the Kansas City Chorale and music director of the Kansas City Symphony Chorus earned his second Grammy Award in as many years from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

The Phoenix Chorale received the 2009 Grammy for best small ensemble performance in the classical music category. The group was honored for its recording, "Spotless Rose: Hymns to the Virgin Mary." The album, released in September 2008, is an international anthology of 20th and 21st century musical settings of ancient texts on the Virgin Mary.

Charles, a native of Savannah, Mo., graduated with a bachelor's degree in music with majors in piano and voice and earned a master's in vocal performance from the Conservatory of Music at the University of Missouri – Kansas City.

Charles received the Distinguished Alumni Award in 1999 from the Alumni Association and was the speaker at Western's 2005 spring commencement.



Charles Bruffy '81

The Kansas City Chorale and the Phoenix Chorale were nominated for a total of four Grammys in four categories. In addition to best small ensemble performance, "Spotless Rose" was nominated for best classical album. A joint recording by the two chorales, "Rheinberger: Sacred Choral Works," was nominated for best choral performance and best surround sound

album. The disc, released in November 2007, is the third album in a series of joint recordings by the professional choruses. It features the rarely recorded choral music of 19th century composer Josef Rheinberger.

Last year, the two groups' joint recording, "Grechaninov: Passion Week," was nominated for four Grammys, including best classical album, best choral performance and best surround sound, and won the award for best engineered album in the classical music category. ■

Directory Update

The Alumni Services Office is working with Harris Connect to produce "2009 Alumni: Today," a directory of alumni names, addresses and more.

By now, you may have received an invitation via email, inviting you to fill out an online information questionnaire so you can be listed in the directory. If you have not updated your information online, please do so soon!

Sometime this month, Harris will begin sending out postcards with a phone number that you can call to give them your updated information.

Colleen Kowich, director of alumni services, noted that Harris Connect produced Western's 2004 directory and they are a reputable directory supplier. They will not sell your information. Throughout the directory creation process, Harris Connect is your contact for any questions or if you do not want to be included in the directory.

"I am looking forward to an outstanding directory so it can serve as a networking tool and a great way to reconnect with classmates," Colleen said. ■

ALUMNI CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 14 Taste at the Top, 6:30 p.m., Fountains at Corby Place, 422 Felix, St. Joseph, Mo.

May 23 Royals vs. Cardinals, Busch Stadium, St. Louis. Information and registration on p. 21.

June 24 Western Wednesday/New graduate welcome:

- Kansas City: 6:30 p.m., Dave & Buster's, 1843 Village West Parkway, Ste 201, Kansas City, Kan. (Legend's).
- St. Joseph: 5:30 p.m., Pinzino's First Ward House, 2101 St. Joseph Ave.

June 26 Western Weekend/New Graduate Reception, 6 p.m., Dave & Buster's, 13857 Riverport Drive, St. Louis (Earth City).

September 18-20 Hall of Fame and Family Weekend. Athletics Hall of Fame Class of 2009 honored at the game Sept. 19; a Legacy Brunch for families of alumni Sept. 20.

September 26 Tailgate at Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kan.

October 15-18 Homecoming 2009; Alumni Awards Banquet Thursday, Oct. 15.

November 7 Second annual Football Reunion.

**For more information on events,
go to www.griffonalumni.org.**



David Rich '95, visits with Brandy Criss '07, at a student-alumni networking reception this spring.



Please check your attic!

The Western library is missing some issues of past Griffon News. If you have any of these back issues, please consider donating them to the library:

Fall 1938-Spring 1940

Fall 1957-Spring 1969

Fall 1973-Spring 1975

Thank you!

Baseball in St. Louis!

Last year, we had a great time at Kauffman Stadium for a tailgate and a Show-Me State rivalry baseball game. This year we're crossing the state and having the party in St. Louis!

Join us May 23 when the Cardinals host the Royals at Busch Stadium. The tailgate starts at 1 p.m. in the stadium parking lot and game time is 3 p.m. Prices are \$35

per person for the tailgate (beverages not included) and game. Cardinal season ticket holders can buy a tailgate-only ticket for \$12.

We are also chartering a bus this year. A Heartland Trailways Charter will leave campus at 6 a.m. Saturday morning and make a passenger pick-up stop at Western's KC Northland site in Tuileries Plaza before

heading to Busch Stadium. The bus, which has room for 30 people, will depart for Kansas City and St. Joseph after the game. Cost for the bus trip, tailgate and game is \$104 per person.

Purchase your tickets by filling out the form below or online at www.griffonalumni.org/cardsroyals09. ■

Take me out to the ballgame!!

Royals vs. Cardinals

May 23, 2009

Busch Stadium

Tailgate 1 p.m., Game 3 p.m.

Name _____ Class year _____

Address _____

Phone # _____ Email _____

I want to purchase _____ combo tailgate and game ticket(s) at \$35 each \$ _____

Have season tickets? _____ tailgate tickets only at \$12 each \$ _____

I want to reserve _____ seats on the bus at \$104 each (bus, tailgate and game) \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

I have enclosed: ☐ Check made payable to MWSU Alumni Services OR ☐ Credit Card Information:

Type of card: ☐ Visa ☐ Master Card ☐ Discover 3-digit verification code on back _____

Name on card _____ Credit card # _____

Signature _____

SPRING 2009

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Mail to: Alumni Services, 4525 Downs Drive, St. Joseph, MO 64507. Since this is a premium game, tickets are limited – order soon! For more information or questions, call 816-271-5646 or email ckowich@missouriwestern.edu.

Greek life, Western style

On page 53 of the 1927 Griffon Yearbook is a photo of 20 women who were members of the first social

sorority for the St. Joseph Junior College, Omega Tau. The text below the photo reads, "One of the most notable events of J.C.'s most notable year was the invasion of the Greeks - a decided departure for this institution."



Omega Taus, 1927

And so began the history of Greek life for this institution. Unfortunately, that first stint didn't last very long. The Omega Taus are not mentioned past the 1928 yearbook and the next mention of a social Greek organization in the yearbooks isn't until 1965.

Several sororities and fraternities sprung up in the late '60s and early '70s on Western's campus, and the Greek organizations have been coming and going ever since. The first official fraternity on campus was

Delta Nu, which organized in 1966 and later became affiliated with Lambda Chi Alpha. After the Omega Taus, the next sorority didn't come to campus until the mid- to late-'60s - Chi Chi Chi.

When Randy Klein '78, was a student and a member of the Lambda Chi Alphas, he said there were three very active fraternities on campus and each one had about 100 members. But all three went under in the 1980s.

Carole Dunn '91, a member of Sigma Kappa, said there were only her sorority and the Phi Mus on campus when she was a student. It didn't seem like the college could support more than one sorority at a time, she said. By 1991, there were no sororities and only two fraternities.

Then slowly throughout the '90s, following a national trend, the numbers began to grow again, and the 1997 yearbook reported five fraternities and six sororities. In 2000, there were 10 groups, but their member numbers were smaller than in the past.

Griffon Yearbook, 1927:

"Almost from the start, people began to say, 'Those Omega Taus certainly do have lots of good times.' That is putting it mildly! For

instance, there was the Halloween party in a vacant house, the New Year's Eve watch party at the home of Elizabeth Peacock, the subscription dance at the Elks Club on Washington's birthday."

"Greeks at MWC initiate the positive action that is necessary for building school spirit, strong leadership, and brotherhood through support of school sports, social activities, and community projects. They innovate the campus traditions which will account for a strong MWC, today and tomorrow."

Griffon Yearbook, 1971

Some things haven't changed since 1927. What's an article about Greek life without mentioning the fun? Ask any Greek alumnus and they can tell you about the theme parties, black light parties, pool parties, toga parties, mystery parties and well, just plain parties.



"We had some good times at the Phi Sig house," Carole said. "Boy, did they have parties." Fortunately, in the late '80s, the house was "out in the country" at the intersection of Riverside and Mitchell.

Jason Buss '03, of Phi Delta Theta, says he has many great memories of mixers, fundraising events and Homecoming, but he'll never forget his memories and "hundreds of crazy stories" from spring break trips with his fraternity brothers and friends. "Nobody should ever just go home and waste a week," he said. "They just seemed to get better each year." On spring break of his senior year, he proposed to his wife, Monica (Lee) '03, while they were parasailing.

Randy calls his fraternity days "the best of times." He remembers Lambda Chi Alpha's biggest (off campus) fundraiser – a Beef and Beer Bust. For an admission price of \$5, there were lots of bands, lots of burgers and lots of beer. It was a real crowd pleaser, he said, but too many underage drinkers at the event led to its short life span of just a few years.

Griffon Yearbook 1927: "The purpose of the founders of Omega Tau was not only to further social activity, but to support and promote all the college activities. And how they have lived up to that promise!"

To write an article about Greek life at Western and only mention the parties would do a grave disservice to the Greeks. From haunted houses to blood drives, programs, service activities and especially Homecoming, the Greeks have been involved in every aspect of campus life ever since they rushed their first pledge.

Last fall, Don Willis, director of student engagement, received a call from a local nursing home, asking for help to decorate for the holidays. "I immediately called one of the fraternities," he said. "They can activate the greatest number of people to help in the shortest amount of time." Don said he gets similar calls about once a month, and the Greeks always come to mind first.

continued on page 24

Greek life, Western style

Today, each of the nine Greek groups on campus has a designated philanthropic cause and they sponsor three to four campus or philanthropic events each year. “The foundation of every sorority and fraternity is community service and philanthropy. Those groups are doing more than any other organization (on campus) when it comes to philanthropy,” he said.

Randy said that was the case when he was a student, too. “Any time Dean (Forrest) Hoff needed something done, he called the Greeks.”

Jacarra Hooks '05, said her sorority was always involved in service work when she was a student and a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha. She said the group focused a lot on self-esteem, education and mentoring, and wellness and fitness. Today, as an analyst at Cerner Corporation in Kansas City, Mo., Jacarra said she continues her sorority's tradition of volunteering in the community. This spring, she connected with an AKA graduate chapter. “For me, it's a lifelong commitment,” she said of her sorority membership. “It's a commitment to community service; I want to be active and give back to my community.”

Zach Ramsay '02, has remained connected to his fraternity and its service, as well. Each spring, he can be found in front of the Hy-Vee Food Store helping his fellow TKEs with their annual service project, “TKE-in-a-Box,” when they raise money and collect food for the Second Harvest Food Bank. As an alumnus, Zach said he likes his role as an advisor to current fraternity members. “They need help and they need mentors,” he said. “I want to show them that alumni should be active and help out. Students appreciate it more than you know.”

Griffon Yearbook 1927: “So far, Omega Tau is the only Greek letter sorority in Junior College, but the next few years will undoubtedly see the advent of other chapters – not only local, but national. Then that little group of seven charter members of Omega Tau may look back with pride and say to themselves, 'Just see what WE started.'”

And just look at what they started, indeed. Western's Greek life is here to stay.

Today there are four fraternities on campus - Alpha Phi Alpha, Inc., Phi Delta Theta, Phi Sigma Kappa and Tau Kappa Epsilon – and five sororities – Alpha Gamma Delta, Alpha Sigma Alpha, Phi Mu, Sigma Sigma Sigma and Zeta Phi Beta, Inc., comprising approximately 200 students.

While Greek student numbers at Western may be down from the past, both Duane Bruce '99, associate dean of students, and Don hope to see numbers increase in the coming years. “It (Greek life) gives people a place,” Duane said. “Whenever you're connected to a group or place, you're more likely to be successful. It is strongly tied to retention.”

Randy agreed. “There are guys who would have dropped out of school had it not been for a fraternity. It kept them active, part of a team. It's good to have a strong Greek system on a campus.”

“As we transition from what was initially designed as a commuter campus to a residential campus today, we need to support and grow the Greek system,” said Phi Sigma Kappa alumnus Dirck Clark '85, and chair of the Board of Governors. “Nothing would make me happier than to see plans come together for a Greek village. I would like to see my old fraternity have a house on campus.”

Duane said one of his goals is to increase the number of historically black sororities and fraternities on campus. Today there is only one of each and at one time there were six. He is currently talking with national historically black fraternities and sororities about establishing chapters at Western.

LaShandra (Acklin) Shepard '02, wants to do all she can to bring more black Greek organizations to campus. As a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha, she says her Greek experience “shaped me and made me a better person and helped me use my skills. I owe a lot to them.”

LaShandra said current students have told her they wish there were more Greek opportunities for them, and she told Duane she would do all she could to increase the number of black sororities on campus. “It truly changed my college experience and I want that for others.”

Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc., was the first black sorority on Western's campus and it disbanded in 2003.

“To this day, my sorority sisters are the ones I know I can call anytime for anything,” said Jill Spencer '03, a member of Alpha Sigma Alpha. She says a number of her sorority sisters in the Kansas City area try to get together once a month for lunch.

“I cannot say enough positive things about being a member of Alpha Sigma Alpha and the whole Greek community at Missouri Western.”

“When I came here 20 years ago, I was not a Greek supporter,” Don said. “But now I am behind them 100 percent. I am extremely proud of the Greeks.” ■

ALUMnotes

1970s

DAN DANFORD '78, president and CEO of Family Investment Center in St. Joseph, Mo., had his firm listed as one of the top firms for physicians in *Medical Economics* magazine's 150 Best Financial Advisors for Doctors list.

TAMARA GLISE '79, is the interim director of the Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Public Library. She played a large role in preserving the library collections during the flooding of the library in June 2008.

1980s

JOE BRANDENBURG '82, head softball coach at Palmyra (Mo.) R-I High School, guided his team to their third Class 2 state championship last fall. The team is the only team in any class to win three championships in a row since the inception of the Missouri State High School Athletic Association.

GRETCHEN HERNDON '85, retired as director of Head Start for Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph, Mo. She had been with the organization for more than 30 years and its director for 14.

TRACY BOWMAN '87, is the director of Head Start for Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph, Mo. She has been with the organization since 2000.

A.J. PROBST '87, is the acting executive director of the Advanced Technology Center at Linn State Technical College in Mexico, Mo.

LU ANN GREGG '88, is a manager of engineering design for AT & T in Independence, Mo. She has a 16 year-old daughter, Kylee.

PAUL RHOADS '89, was named head football coach at Iowa State University in Ames (see p. 11).

1990s

JANET ELROD '90, was named 2008 Missouri Elementary Counselor of the Year. She is a counselor at Skaith Accelerated School in St. Joseph, Mo.

MATT ROCK '91, was promoted to captain with the St. Joseph Police Department. He joined the force in 1992 as a patrol officer.

LISA JOHNSTON '92, and Tony Randolph were married July 1, 2008. She is a seventh-grade communication arts teacher at Nowlin Middle School in the Independence (Mo.) School District.

TWILYA (HENRY) L'ECUYER '92, and her husband, Tom, announce the birth of a daughter, Autumn Elizabeth, born Sept. 22, 2008. The family also has a daughter Olivia.

CHRISTY (KESSLER) SOEKEN '93, and her husband, Charlie, announce the birth of a daughter, Caroline Elizabeth, born Feb. 29, 2008. Christy earned an MBA from Webster University in 2007.

SHAWNA BARNES '96, is an area specialist for the USDA Rural Development St. Joseph, Mo., office.

RODNEY POTTER '96, joined the accounting firm of Sumner, Carter, Hardy, Rich and Company LLC in St. Joseph, Mo.

ANGELO BARTULICA '97, was ordained a Catholic priest for the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese in December 2008.

BRIAN E. KELLEY '97, was promoted to the rank of corporal in the Missouri State Highway Patrol and will be designated the assistant zone supervisor of Zone 1, serving Platte County.



SHAWN MARNEY '97, and his wife, Tianyi, announce the birth of a daughter, Rhianna Alexis, born Jan. 21, 2009.

JANICE (BROWN) ROTHGANGER '97, was promoted to captain with the St. Joseph, Mo., Police Department. She joined the force in 1994.



REGINA (LUNCEFORD) CALDERWOOD '98, and her husband, Bill, announce the birth of a son, William Forrest, born Dec. 28, 2008.

JAIME GRAYSON '99, is a banking relationship manager for Commerce Bank. He joined the bank in 2005 and served as manager of a branch in the Kansas City, Mo., and Liberty, Mo., area.

ELIZABETH (SCHENK) POTTEIGER '99, and her husband, Tommy, announce the birth of a son, Michael Patrick, born March 13, 2008. He joins siblings Jack and Mary.

2000s

SCOTT COLEMAN '00, is the commander, Headquarters and Support Company, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade at Camp Taji, Iraq. He recently met Gen. George William Casey, Jr., Chief of Staff of the United States Army.

AMY (LIESMANN) CORDONNIER '00, graduated from Officer Candidate School as a second lieutenant in the Missouri Army National Guard. She serves as a signal officer with Company A, Special Troops Battalion, 35th Infantry Division in Kansas City, Mo.

CHRISTINA GROUSE '00, joined the law firm of Andereck, Evans, Milne, Widger and Johnson LLC at its office in Trenton, Mo. She earned her law degree from the University of Missouri – Kansas City School of Law in 2004.

LISA (GRIMWOOD) NOVINGER '00, is a graphic and web designer at Poole Advertising, a full service ad agency. Poole has offices in Hannibal, Mo., and Marshall, Mo.

KRISTI (BAILEY) RASMUSSEN '00, is the director of communication for the St. Joseph Area Chamber of Commerce.

JANESSA (PULLEY) SHEEHAN '00, was named vice president at Summit Bank of Kansas City, responsible for loan administration, compliance and consumer lending.

2000s continued



AMY (MCCREADY) '01 and JEREMY '03, HART announce the birth of a daughter, Emily Lynn, born Dec. 28, 2008.

She joins a sister, Elyse Marie. Also, Jeremy was promoted to executive vice president of First National Bank in Bethany, Mo.

ERIC SHAIFFER '01, is pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Maryville, Mo.



MOLLY (WATTS) SHALZ '01, and her husband, Naaman, announce the birth of a son, Landon Neil, born Aug. 8, 2008. Molly is the director of

special events for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation chapter of Kansas and western Missouri. She earned her master's degree in management and leadership from Baker University in 2005.

JULIA CHANEY '02, joined the Cruse Law Firm, P.C. of Hannibal, Mo., as an associate attorney.

JAMIE DOSS '02, is an associate attorney with the Peppard Law Office, P.C. in Memphis, Mo. She graduated from the St. Louis University School of Law.

JASON ESLINGER '02, appeared in 13 episodes of HGTV's reality show, "Designed to Sell." Jason is a professional carpenter.

NATHAN NOLTE '02, earned a master's degree as a pediatric nurse practitioner and works at Children's Medical Center in Dallas.



ANGIE SPRINGS '02, and her husband, Josh, announce the birth of a son, Landan Joshua, born Jan. 24, 2008. They also have a son Corban.

STEVE ALLEE '03, and Sarah Mabry were married May 31, 2008. The couple resides in Platte City, Mo.

TOSHA BYERS '03, received a master's degree in human resources management from the University of Phoenix – Kansas City, in 2006.

MANDY FERBERT '03, and Nshan Thompson were married Oct. 4, 2008. The couple resides in St. Joseph, Mo.

DANIELLE (JONES) ROBINSON '03, and her husband, William, announce the birth of a son, William Joseph III, born Sept. 3, 2008. The couple has two other children, Miya and Kira. Danielle earned a master's degree in management from Baker University.

BROOKE (SOLLARS) SEEVERS '03, graduated from the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences and is a doctor of osteopathic medicine. She is currently in her first year of residency practicing obstetrics and gynecology at Truman Medical Center and St. Luke's Hospital in Kansas City, Mo.



CARRIE (SWARTZ) BOLLMEYER '04 and her husband, Jon, announce the birth of a son, Andrew Michael, born May 29, 2008.

Carrie also passed the CPA (Certified Public Accountant) exam and is licensed in the state of Missouri.

CHARITY CORDRAY '04, and Nick Banko were married Oct. 18, 2008. The couple resides in Marceline, Mo.

"Heart of Diamonds" produces heart of gold

Dave Donelson's '74, goal was to write a romantic thriller set in an exotic location, but his research led him to a passion for human rights and his becoming an advocate for the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Dave graduated from Western with a bachelor of arts in rhetoric and public address (probably the only one ever awarded, he joked) and spent a career in advertising sales and broadcasting. When he sold his interest in several television stations and related companies, he knew his second career would be spent as an author.

While conducting research for his third book, a 1999 article in National Geographic sparked his interest. The article was about Wildlife Conservation Society biologist J. Michael Fay, who hiked 2,000 miles across central Africa

surveying the land and wildlife of the Congo River Basin in 1999-2000. That article convinced him that the Congo would make a good setting for his novel. Then a feature in Time Magazine about the relationship between televangelist Pat Robertson and Congo's dictator, Mobutu Sese-Seko, gave him an idea for a plot.

That was the beginning of a year's worth of research that took his wife, Nora, and him to Uganda and Zambia (it was too dangerous to visit Congo). Thousands of photographs of Africa, hundreds of conversations and reams of notes later, Dave wrote "Heart of Diamonds," a romantic thriller that involves diamond smuggling, a civil war and the White House. He published it last fall.

After his novel hit bookstore shelves, Dave couldn't forget about what he had learned about Congo. "I've become obsessed with the horrible

things being done in Congo," he said. "What is not fiction in "Heart of Diamonds" is the terrible plight of the people of the Congo, which is the direct result of the unadulterated greed exhibited by the people eager to control the vast natural resources of the country."

So on any given day, Dave can be found blogging at up to 10 different sites, telling about the situation in Congo and garnering support for its people. He raises money for Women for Women International, a group that provides support for female survivors of war or civil strife.

"Six million people have died in Congo in the past 10 years," he says. "It's the world's worst humanitarian crisis and it's become very important to me." ■

Smolt signals

Are young salmon getting sucked into the man-made channels of the Sacramento River and taking the long way to the Pacific Ocean, or are they staying on course and getting there by the shortest route? Or are they even making it to the ocean? Those are the questions Dr. Shannon Brewer '01, is asking as part of her job as a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in California.

Last winter, Shannon implanted tags into the abdominal region of young salmon, aka smolts, to track their journey from fresh water to salty (salmon are born in fresh water, migrate to the ocean, then return to fresh water to reproduce). Each tag inside the smolt sends out a different pulse, and transmitters along the shoreline will pick up and record the smolt signals to track their paths.

Her team is trying to determine the best dates to open and close the channels in order to protect the smolts. Shannon said it will most likely be a five-year project before they can develop a computer model for the management agencies to follow.

It's all part of a fisheries career that she loves, and she learns something new every day.

As the only girl growing up in a family of nine children (yes, eight brothers and no sisters), Shannon spent a lot of time outdoors and knew she wanted a career where she could spend time



Dr. Shannon Brewer '01

outside. But she didn't realize a person could make a career out of working with fish until she took a part-time job with the Missouri Department of Conservation as a junior at Western. She earned a master's and doctorate in fisheries and wildlife sciences from the University of Missouri – Columbia and began working for the FWS last year.

Her advice to current students? "If you have a professor who is willing to make you better than you are, take every opportunity to take advantage of that." Shannon said she is so appreciative of all the research opportunities the professors at Western offered her, especially Dr. David Ashley, professor of biology. Along with the educational experience, she values the great memories and stories that came with those research opportunities.

"There were always four or five students who were volunteering to do the research. Those that did are doing very well today. Those that didn't are working in a convenience store with a biology degree," she said with a laugh. ■



AMY (TRAYNOR) '04, and DANNY '04, PUMMILL announce the birth of a son, Connor Burke, born Aug. 23, 2007.

GREG WOODS '04 & '06, is a chemistry instructor at Cowley Community College in Mulvane, Kan.

ELIJAH HAAHR '05, was recognized as a "Young Lawyer You Should Know" by the Young Lawyers Division of the Missouri Bar Association. He graduated from law school at the University of Missouri – Columbia and was awarded the "Order of Barristers" as one of the top 10 oral advocates in the graduating class. Elijah

currently practices law with Hyde, Love & Overby, LLP in Springfield, Mo. He married Amanda Wolf March 22, 2008.

DUSTIN HOLCUMBRINK '05, director of sales and marketing at Adams Pointe Golf Club in Blue Springs, Mo., was honored by KemperSports Management as the Rookie Sales & Marketing Director of the Year.

RICH CROWE '06, received the associate wildlife biologist certification from The Wildlife Society. Rich is a natural resources specialist with the Macon County Conservation District in Decatur, Ill.

ASHLEY FALTER '06, passed the CPA (Certified Public Accountant) exam in November 2008. She is employed with KPMG in Kansas City, Mo., as a tax associate.

KELLY FILES '06, and Michael Rogers were married Oct. 25, 2008. The couple resides in Kansas City, Mo.

MEGAN (BROWN) '06, and CHRISTOPHER '08, MCBANE announce the birth of a daughter, Grace Elizabeth, born June 20, 2008.

MICHAEL O'NEAL '06, is a probation and parole officer for the District 39 Office (Trenton) of the Missouri Board of Probation and Parole.

MARY VANDERPOOL '06, and Stephen Moser Jr. were married July 26, 2008. The couple resides in Boonville, Mo.

JENNIFER GREUB '07, joined the accounting firm of Sumner, Carter, Hardy, Rich and Company LLC in St. Joseph, Mo.

CORNEST HALL '07, estimated and project managed the construction of the Dallas Cowboys' new stadium.



SARAH (NAGEL) HARDIN '07, and her husband, Mike, announce the birth of a son, Brody Michael, born Oct. 20, 2008.

He joins a sister Carlee.

SARAH JONES '07, and Trent Mollus were married June 28, 2008. The couple resides in St. Joseph, Mo.

ELIZABETH LOWRANCE '07, and Matt Liechti were married Aug. 30, 2008. The couple resides in St. Joseph, Mo.

ADAM MUSICK '07, and Kathleen Annigian were married Oct. 18, 2008. Kathleen is a Western student. The couple resides in St. Joseph, Mo.

GREG SAGASER '07, and KIRSTEN PRATHER '08, were married Nov. 27, 2008. The couple resides in St. Joseph, Mo.

ALICIA SCHMIDGALL '07, is the human resources manager at the Villages of Jackson Creek in Independence, Mo.

KADY MABURY '08, and Blake Weddle were married Aug. 2, 2008. Blake is a student at Western. The couple resides in St. Joseph, Mo.

In Memory ...

We honor those who have recently passed away. If you want us to include someone in this listing, please call 816-271-5651, mail to Alumni Services Office, 4525 Downs Drive, St. Joseph, MO 64507, or e-mail holtz@missouriwestern.edu.

JUDY L. ACORD '99, St. Joseph, Mo., Nov. 27, 2008.

THOMAS W. BEACH '06, St. Joseph, Mo., Nov. 15, 2008.

BILLY HOWARD BLANKENSHIP, Maryville, Mo., Jan. 21, 2009. Billy was a former accounting professor.

RITA S. (SCHWADER) CONNETT '50, St. Joseph, Mo., Nov. 14, 2008.

LAWRENCE DEAN COX '77, Wathena, Kan., Dec. 2, 2008.

SHEILA J. FLETCHALL '00, St. Joseph, Mo., Nov. 9, 2008.

NATHAN MICHAEL KING, infant son of Bradley King '03, and Laura Kristynik-King, Bryan, Texas, Nov. 13, 2008.

HELEN KROG, JC, St. Joseph, Mo., Dec. 19, 2008.

KENNETH D. MONACH SR. '70, Largo, Fla., April 28, 2008.

KELLY NALLE '00, Pattonsburg, Mo., Oct. 3, 2008.

BRIAN CHAE-GUN PIEPERGERDES '07, Reston, Va., Feb. 1, 2009.

KEITH ROBERTS, Western's director of grants and sponsored programs, Kansas City, Mo., Dec. 25, 2008.

JEANETTE SCHOENLAUB-JACKSON '96, St. Joseph, Mo., Dec. 11, 2008.

KELLY ANN (LINCH) SMITH '85, St. Joseph, Mo., Nov. 15, 2008.

PATRICIA M. (MCENANEY) KNIGHT SMITH, JC, St. Joseph, Mo., Dec. 11, 2008.

LINDA (LYMAN) SWEET '87, St. Joseph, Mo., Dec. 12, 2008.

MARION J. WHITMORE, St. Joseph, Mo., Dec. 20, 2008. Marion was a secretary and receptionist at Western from 1976-1993.

DR. SHERWOOD A. WILSON, JC, Minneapolis, Minn., Jan. 23, 2009.

SHARON (GASPER) YOUNG '07, St. Joseph, Mo., Jan. 17, 2009.

Alumnus makes "Idol"

Asa Barnes '03, received a "golden ticket" during the premiere of the eighth season of the singing competition "American Idol," and appeared on the show in February.

Asa won the Fox 4 KC Idol Live event last year to earn an audition spot before the celebrity judges. In the Kansas City, Mo., audition episode of the show that aired in January, Asa received "yes" votes from all four celebrity

judges after performing Michael Jackson's "The Way You Make Me Feel," and advanced to the "Hollywood Round" of American Idol.

Unfortunately, he was cut as he vied for one of 36 semi-finalist positions.

Asa earned a bachelor of science in education with a concentration in vocal music and teaches band at Smith-Hale Middle School in Kansas City, Mo. This was his second try at making the show - in "Idol's" fourth season, he made the top 75 contestants. ■

Tell us what's new!

Name _____ Maiden _____ Class of _____

Spouse _____ Class of _____

Address _____ City, State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ email _____

What's New _____



When senior Rylan Sampson was a preteen, he spent a lot of time in Western math and chemistry classes with his mom, Danette '83. But his mom wasn't a nontraditional student who brought her son along to class, like most people assumed. The nontraditional student was really Rylan, who began taking college classes at Western when he was 10 years old. This spring he will graduate with a math major and physics minor. He's 17, Western's youngest student to earn a bachelor's degree.

Danette attended many classes with her son when he first started to help him take notes, and Rylan joked that his mom had to attend chemistry labs since he wasn't tall enough to reach the chemicals on the top shelves.

Dr. Tim Miller, assistant professor of math, taught Rylan college algebra when he was 10. "I can understand why his mom would be apprehensive," he said. "He was going to class with students twice his age."

Rylan's parents (his father, Rod, is a 1983 Western graduate) knew they had an exceptionally gifted child at a pretty young age. He was reading, spelling and putting puzzles of the map of the United States together around 18 months. At age two, Rylan was his sister's "Show and Tell" item, where he out-spelled most of her second-grade classmates. He started kindergarten at age four ("They figured if he could play Hangman, he was ready for kindergarten," his mom said). And he was taking French and third-grade spelling classes as a kindergartener.

As a fifth-grader at Eugene Field Elementary School in St. Joseph, Mo., it became apparent that Rylan needed even more academic challenges, so he began taking the developmental math classes at Western.

Danette explained that while they wanted him to be academically challenged, they also wanted him to be able to maintain his friendships with children his age at the same time. So Rylan would spend part of his days on campus and the rest in his fifth-grade classroom.

Rylan completed Western's developmental math courses, Math 090 and 095, in the spring and summer of 2002. "After that, we didn't know what to do. He was paving new trails," Danette said. "But we said, 'Let's just try it (a

regular college class).'" So, even though he was still only 10 years old, Rylan enrolled in college algebra.

"He took to college algebra like a duck to water," said Tim. "He's a very pleasant student."

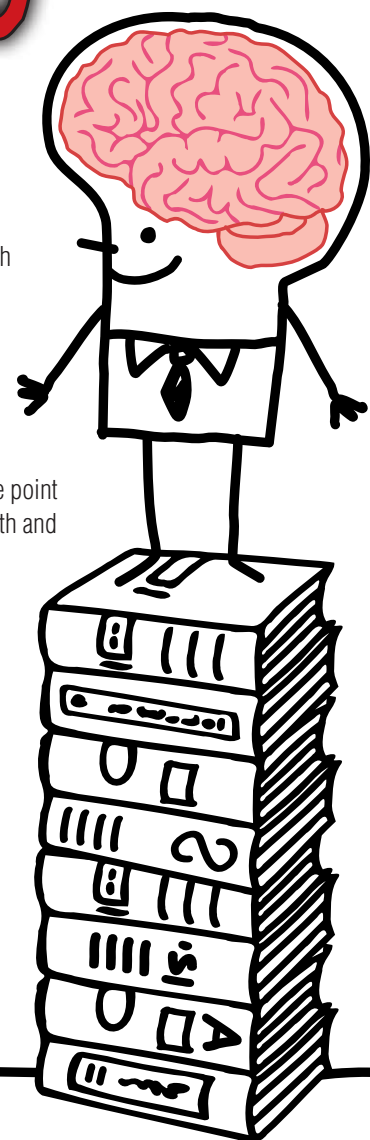
Rylan continued taking college classes part time until he finished middle school. He then took a full course load at Western while working on his high school diploma online through the Missouri University Online High School.

And what was his most challenging class? High school American History. "I'm really good with math and science, but English and history aren't my strong suits," Rylan admitted. In fact, his English class this semester may pull down his grade point average some from the 4.0 GPA he earned in his math and physics classes.

Rylan doesn't turn 18 until this fall, so he plans to finish up his requirements for a computer science major and then look into graduate schools to pursue his doctorate. He hopes to teach college math someday.

"He's had to work really hard to make his grades. He studies for hours on end and has a lot of homework," Danette said. "We're proud of his ambition."

"It's been pretty crazy. They (his courses) took a lot of getting used to, but I eventually found a routine," Rylan said. "It's been a really good experience for me." ■



Above: Rylan and Dr. Tim Miller



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Lids, * East Hills Shopping Center

Mark-it Imprinted Sports Wear, 2303 N. Belt Hwy.

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Wal-Mart, two locations on Belt Hwy.

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