ACADEMIC TRAILBLAZING
HOW WCU IS TAKING A NEW PATH
IN REWARDING THE WORK OF FACULTY
COOL CATS
First-year students at Western Carolina make a big splash before they ever arrive on campus, thanks to First Ascent. A wilderness orientation program, First Ascent offers unique outdoor adventures specifically for incoming freshmen. It is designed to help high school graduates transition to college life by making new friends, learning about themselves and WCU, and having fun in Western North Carolina’s mountains.
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Novel policies that reward faculty for nontraditional work garner attention

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In celebration of a half decade of past experiences in the Fine and Performing Arts Center and looking ahead to the coming years, Western Carolina will host a semiformal gala featuring red carpets, bright lights, gallery openings and a new Gershwin musical Friday, Oct. 22.

The university’s $30 million showcase for the arts and arts education opened its doors to the public five years ago this October amid a gala evening of elegance and entertainment by comedian Jay Leno. Since then, the 122,000-square-foot center has brought to the region cultural events ranging from sellout performances of concert, drama and dance to visual arts, music and theater festivals. Tens of thousands of people have been touched by an experience within the walls of the venue over the years, said Robert Kehrberg, dean of the College of Fine and Performing Arts.

The FAPAC has played host to the annual Galaxy of the Stars Series, featuring performers such as the Capitol Steps, N.C. Symphony, Atlanta Ballet and political satirist Mark Russell. In addition to providing a home stage for WCU-produced plays and musicals, the venue has attracted nationally known artists including the Smothers Brothers, Mickey Rooney, Linda Lavin, Roy Clark and Garrison Keillor. The center’s Fine Art Museum has held about 90 exhibitions ranging from student and faculty shows to photographs from the early days of rock ‘n’ roll and print pieces by contemporary glass pioneer Harvey Littleton.

An evening of celebration will kick off outdoors at 6 p.m. with a cocktail reception under festive tents in the FAPAC courtyard. Guests are invited to mingle before the show; preview the opening of a new gallery exhibit in the Fine Art Museum, “Mike Smith: Seeing Rural Appalachia”; and witness the unveiling of the outdoor sculpture exhibition, a new addition to the center’s cultural offerings.

Festivities then move indoors for an opening performance at 7 p.m. by the Smoky Mountain Brass Quintet followed at 7:30 p.m. by “’S Wonderful,” a new off-Broadway show celebrating the music of George and Ira Gershwin.

Tickets to the special night are on sale now. For ticket information, visit fapac.wcu.edu or call 828.227.2479.
As creator and developer of Avant Garden Organic Farm, Curt Collins ’09 had been getting his hands dirty long before he crossed the stage in his cap and gown. Located in Cullowhee, Avant Garden began in 2008 with a mission to provide a safe, secure food source for the community and act as an educational tool about food production. “Our vision is to create a sustainable, low-impact organic farm with an events venue and a picnic area to build the local community through culture, art and knowledge,” said Collins, who earned his degree in nutrition and dietetics.

Entering its third year, Avant Garden already is moving in the vision’s direction. “So far, broad spectrums of customers and visitors have come to the garden,” said Collins. “We participate in the annual Jackson County farmer’s market farm tour, class tours from the local schools and service learning at WCU. Our produce is used in local eateries, such as Rolling Stone Burrito, El Torito Grill, The Mad Batter and Cat’s Nip Café in Cullowhee, and Spring Street Cafe, Guadalupe Cafe and The Underground in Sylva.”

Community members visit the farm and buy its organic products, too. Wes Stone, associate professor of engineering and technology, purchases peppers from the farm while learning new techniques about gardening. “I used one of my visits to Avant Garden for educational purposes, since I have a keen interest in organic gardening,” said Stone, whose wife, Suzanne, owns Rolling Stone Burrito. “I took my sons with me, and we learned some of the important tips to gardening in general, as well as organic gardening. I consult with Curt on a frequent basis when I have gardening or nutrition questions. He is a wealth of knowledge.”

In addition, Collins sells his produce at the Jackson County farmer’s market in Sylva on Saturday mornings, collaborating with other farmers in the local area while diversifying his crops to include 10 tomato strains and seven garlic types. “Curt has developed his garden into community-supported agriculture,” said Baldwin Sanders, assistant professor of nutrition and dietetics. “Avant Garden offers fresh, healthy, local food. Supporting local farmers keeps money in the community. Sustainable agriculture helps preserve the values of rural communities and protects the farmland.”

Avant Garden offers education, healthy and holistic nutrition, relaxation, and a greater connection with nature and self, said Collins. “Ultimately, I hope for a stronger, closer, healthier, more self-sufficient community,” he said. Others hope for the same. “Avant Garden is key to our university and surrounding community for several reasons,” said Stone. “Most importantly, it is a locally owned, locally operated business. We are a small community, and we need examples of successful small businesses in all sectors of economy. Additionally, Avant Garden provides an educational opportunity with regard to organic gardening and healthy nutrition.”

Curt Collins ’09 shows how his garden grows.
A pioneering civil engineer now oversees WCU’s construction management program

The only woman to head a college or university construction management department in the United States has joined the Western Carolina faculty as the first Joe W. Kimmel Distinguished Professor of Construction Management. J.K. Yates began her duties as Kimmel Professor and head of WCU’s Department of Construction Management in June.

Yates’ interest in the construction field goes all the way back to her high school days, when she worked as an unpaid intern for an architect. “I started out in architecture because I thought architects were the ones who built structures, and I designed two houses in high school that were built,” Yates said. One of the houses became the home of a physician, and the other was built for an opera singer. “When I look back on it now, it seems really amazing to me that I was able to do that at that age,” she said.

A native of Coos Bay, Ore., Yates earned her undergraduate degree in civil engineering at the University of Washington. As a graduate student at Texas A&M University, she became the first woman in the world to receive a doctoral degree in civil engineering with a concentration in construction engineering and management.

Before joining the WCU faculty, Yates served as chair and professor in the Department of Construction Management and Engineering at North Dakota State University, and her previous work included developing the construction engineering graduate program at San Jose State University, which was the largest construction engineering graduate program in the world for a decade.

The author of 10 books on engineering and construction, Yates also has worked for a variety of engineering and construction firms in the United States and overseas. Her most difficult project was working on a liquefied natural gas plant in the jungles of Borneo, Indonesia. “Being totally immersed in the culture of a developing country where everything is completely the opposite of what you are used to irrevocably changes your perspective on life,” she said.

Yates was honored in late summer as the Construction Industry Institute’s “Distinguished Professor for 2010” at the institute’s annual conference in Orlando, Fla. Linda Seestedt-Stanford, WCU’s interim provost, said Yates is a valuable addition to the university. “Dr. Yates is a world-renowned engineer, author and researcher, but what struck me most when I talked with her at her interview visit was her passion for teaching,” Seestedt-Stanford said. “She shared many stories about her students and their accomplishments. We are very fortunate to have Dr. Yates in the Kimmel Professorship.”

WCU’s Joe W. Kimmel Distinguished Professorship in Construction Management was endowed in 2006 through gifts provided by Asheville businessman Joe W. Kimmel and matching state funds allocated through a program initiated by the General Assembly to encourage private support of public institutions of higher education.
Plant samples gathered decades ago from high-elevation rock outcroppings for Western Carolina University’s herbarium intrigued Kathy Gould Mathews when she joined the faculty in 2003. Among the repository’s approximately 30,000 specimens was “Flora of Southern Highland Rock Outcrops,” a collection with more than 1,400 samples gathered from 1966 to 1974 at Southern Appalachian rock outcrops between 2,000 and 5,700 feet in elevation. “I’ve been interested since I came here in revisiting some of the sites of the unique rock outcrop plants and seeing if those plants are still surviving there,” said Mathews, the H.F. and Katherine P. Robinson Professor of Biology and WCU’s herbarium director and curator.

This summer, she returned to the high cliffs where those samples were taken. Mathews and Beverly Collins, associate professor of biology and director of the Southern Appalachian Biodiversity and Ecology Center, won funding from the WCU Public Policy Institute to conduct research at the sites – work that, at times, required steep hiking. On the outcrops, they worked with two students to count and document the plants and insects living within the rare and endangered plant communities. “These plant communities may be among the most sensitive communities to climate warming, in part because their flora includes rare species thought to be relics of the last glaciation,” said Collins. “Further, they may be particularly sensitive to human disturbance, such as trampling by hikers, because the plants grow slowly and are rooted in soil that detaches easily from the rock.”

Mathews and Collins will submit a report with policy recommendations on outcrops access and conservation based on their findings. The report will be shared with organizations that manage these lands in Western North Carolina. “We don’t want to lose these unique communities,” said Collins. “Finding out more about their ecology can help guide policy for protecting them from both human and climate change threats.

The high elevation rock outcrop collection is just one of several at Western Carolina’s still-growing herbarium, one of the largest plant biodiversity resources in the WNC region. Pressed and dried plant specimens are stored in nearly three dozen oak cabinets, and the collections are used for plant identification by botanists, students and researchers alike. It is the main repository for Blue Ridge Parkway collections of North Carolina and also maintains collections from Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The late Clinton Dodson, who was a professor and department head, worked with botany students to build the initial core of the collections starting in 1953. The collection continued to grow under the leadership of succeeding directors James Horton and Dan Pittillo, who contributed much of his personal collection to the herbarium.

Kathy Mathews (inset, left) shows students one of the thousands of specimens from the university’s plant herbarium.
David Dorondo was just hoping to receive a complimentary book to use for reference in teaching his innovative new course, “The Horse in European History,” when he ran across the website of The Long Riders’ Guild and e-mailed the founder of that international organization of equestrian explorers. What the WCU associate professor of history received from Kentucky resident CuChullaine O’Reilly was several texts to use in his course, plus an entire collection of rare horse-related books for WCU’s Hunter Library.

“In my conversations with Mr. O’Reilly, I soon learned that The Long Riders’ Guild Press is arguably the most important U.S. publisher and reprinter of books dealing with equine exploration, history, travel and literature,” Dorondo said. “In Mr. O’Reilly, I also found an enthusiastic supporter of my efforts to build resources for my course. His support, in turn, soon manifested itself in an exceedingly generous offer to donate to the university’s Hunter Library 100 volumes of my choosing.”

Dorondo developed loves of history and horses growing up in Savannah, Ga., and he combined those passions in teaching the course, which he believes to be the only one of its kind in the nation. After leading about 20 students through “The Horse in European History” in summer 2009, Dorondo began working on a list of 100 volumes for the library’s new collection, eventually paring a massive list of prospective titles to 102 books. O’Reilly waived all profits and royalties from the books and also contacted Lightning Source, an on-demand printing firm and an Ingram Content Group company located in La Vergne, Tenn., which agreed to donate costs associated with printing the books and delivering them to the university.

“The donation came about upon my instigation because I believed Professor Dorondo had undertaken an unprecedented step in modern equestrian education,” O’Reilly said. The books are, he said, a “treasure trove containing mankind’s equestrian wisdom and literary history.”

Dorondo said the collection, which arrived at the university early this year, would have a market value of many thousands of dollars and is likely unmatched in university libraries across the nation. “Given the strained budgetary situation, the guild’s willingness to make such a generous donation means a great deal,” he said. “The fact that so many of these titles would long ago have disappeared from circulation without the guild’s efforts to reprint them only enhances the donation’s value.”

The books are mostly 19th- and 20th-century works and range from a volume for children to some written in foreign languages, but they represent the gamut of equine-related literature that is the specialty of The Long Riders’ Guild Press, Dorondo said.

David Dorondo (inset, left) teaches a unique course on the role of the horse in civilization, which led to a contribution of history books.
Why psychology professor Hal Herzog is not an animal rights activist is a question that has dogged him. “That, in a way, is why I wrote the book – to try to figure out why,” said Herzog. In “Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat: Why It’s So Hard to Think Straight About Animals,” Herzog explores how people address the range of questions and moral issues linked to their relationships with animals.

Is it OK to kill animals just because they taste good? Why is it OK to feed a mouse but not a kitten to your pet boa constrictor? Can dogs read people’s minds? Are pit bulls inherently dangerous? Do most children who abuse animals really become violent adults? (Herzog says they don’t.)

“I really changed my mind about human nature in many ways while writing this book,” said Herzog. “It strikes me that one of the things that separates us from animals is we are incredibly different across cultures. For me, that plays out in the world of how we treat animals. Take, for example, dogs. We love dogs. If you ask most people, ‘Is it OK to eat your family dog?’ they say, ‘What a crazy question.’ But historically humans frequently ate dogs, and dogs were probably domesticated in part because people used them as an emergency food source. Even today, people regularly eat dogs in parts of Asia. And in parts of Africa, people keep dogs to keep away strangers and elephants, but they don’t let the dogs in the house, never pet them and don’t give them names. We see these enormous differences in our cultures.”

Herzog first became interested in animal behavior – especially that of reptiles – as a child. He kept about a dozen snakes as pets, and one day was called home from school because his mother found one while cleaning the house. “I knew the snake had escaped, but I didn’t want to tell her,” said Herzog. He went on to conduct research in animal behavior and even developed a personality test for baby snakes. He later studied chickens, and as part of his research interviewed and observed people who engaged in cockfighting. “That’s when I really realized the morality of our interactions with animals was complicated and very interesting,” said Herzog.

He wanted the book to be a good read – entertaining and informative, and early reviewers think he succeeded. Robert M. Sapolsky, a neuroscientist at Stanford University and author of “Monkeyluv” and “A Primate’s Memoir,” said Herzog’s book poses surprising and challenging questions: “As Hal Herzog persuasively argues, we think and feel about animals in all sorts of ways, often in a highly confused, irrational manner that tells us tons about our values as a species.” Meanwhile, Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, author of “The Hidden Life of Deer: Lessons from the Natural World,” said: “I don’t know when I’ve read anything more comprehensive about our highly involved, highly contradictory relationships with animals, relationships which we mindlessly, placidly continue, no matter how irrational they may be.”

For Herzog, writing the book answered his own questions about why he has pets but is not a vegetarian and does not consider himself an animal rights activist. “My answer is that it comes down to intuition – that ethical decisions are not really made by your brain,” said Herzog. “In ethics, the real action is in your heart. Your brain’s job is to justify your gut-level decisions. It becomes a question of logic versus emotion.”

Psychology professor Hal Herzog says a childhood fascination with snakes played a role in his interest in people’s relationships with animals.
TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS
Louis Buck is appointed to lead a college through its reaccreditation process

By BILL STUDENC MPA ’10

There are some familiar faces in new places these days in the College of Business, as Louis Buck, the Wesley Elingburg Distinguished Professor of Business Innovation and director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, is now also serving as interim dean of the college. Linda Seestedt-Stanford, WCU’s interim provost, appointed Buck to lead the college while a national search is conducted for a permanent dean. Ronald A. Johnson stepped down from the post June 30 to become WCU’s first BB&T Distinguished Professor of Capitalism.

Formerly chief financial officer for the competitive businesses of Consolidated Edison in New York, Buck joined the WCU faculty to fill a distinguished professorship position made possible by $250,000 in gifts from Wesley Elingburg ’78, retired chief financial officer with Laboratory Corp. of America, and matched with money from a state fund designed to encourage private support of public institutions of higher education.

Johnson was instrumental in acquiring a November 2008 commitment for the largest gift in the college’s history – $1 million from the BB&T Foundation to support the study of leadership, ethics and capitalism. Half of BB&T’s gift is being matched by the state to create the $1 million professorship endowment, while the other $500,000 of the donation will allow WCU to provide four annual awards to support student research and creative work in the area of leadership, ethics and capitalism, and to create an awards program for faculty members engaged in scholarly work focused on those same issues.

“Dr. Johnson is the ideal candidate for this professorship,” Seestedt-Stanford said. “His experience in business, government and academia, as well as a diverse regional and global perspective, supports his unique vision and ability to bridge real-world practice and theory.”

The BB&T professorship “provides a platform for addressing the fundamental questions of leadership effectiveness, ethics and accountability that challenge all of our institutions,” Johnson said. “I look forward to completing my manuscript, ‘Build to Compete,’ which reflects my research and collaborations with global leaders in the areas of innovation, growth and sustainability and in preparing graduates with the competence and understanding of how to make a difference in their world with integrity and a dedicated commitment to service.”

Shortly after Johnson’s return to the faculty, Seestedt-Stanford announced that Buck would hold the reins as the college completes the process of seeking reaccreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business-International. “Dr. Buck has a record of achievement at WCU, leading a very effective department and being a contributing member of the university community,” she said. “His background in the business world and his life experiences position him well to support the College of Business faculty and staff. I couldn’t be more pleased to have Louis as a part of my leadership team.”
Gurney Chambers ’61 knows firsthand the obstacles and anxieties faced by first-generation college students. Chambers first laid eyes on the campus of Western Carolina College when his brother dropped him off in Cullowhee for the beginning of fall semester 1957. He recalls passing through what is now the back entrance of WCU’s campus and riding up the hill to his new home in Reynolds Residence Hall, where he unpacked his bags to begin his new life – a major step for a young man from a poverty-stricken background in Wilkes County.

With no tradition of higher education in his family, Chambers brought a load of psychological baggage to campus with his lack of self-confidence. “I felt I had to come in style because people would make fun of me, so before I left home I bought a new Samsonite suitcase and a green footlocker to put my things in,” he said.

Like many other first-generation students, Chambers was raised in a challenging economic situation that did not bode well for his educational endeavors. His father, who died at 29, was an alcoholic bootlegger who worked at a sawmill and had only completed second grade, while his mother, with an eighth-grade education, earned money by working on tobacco and apple farms. Still, his mother always put a high value on education and expected her six children to complete high school.

Despite his admitted lack of adequate academic preparation for college, and his social and academic anxieties, Chambers persevered. Later elected student body president, he received his bachelor’s degree and went on to earn master’s and doctoral degrees at Vanderbilt’s Peabody College. Chambers returned to WCU as professor of education in 1967 and filled many roles over the years,
including dean of the School of Education and Psychology (now the College of Education and Allied Professions). He retired as dean in 1998 after serving the university for more than 30 years, and he was awarded an honorary doctorate in 2004.

Not all stories of first-generation students produce such a positive ending. Research indicates that 30 percent of freshmen entering college nationally each year are first-generation students, and 24 percent of the students are both first-generation and low-income. Statistics show that 89 percent of low-income, first-generation students will leave college without a degree within six years of enrollment; more than a quarter of those students will drop out after their first year.

Data collected from WCU’s new students each year do not reveal the percentage of incoming freshmen who can be called “first-generation,” but among the university’s 2009 freshmen who filled out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, the standard form to receive financial aid, slightly fewer than 36 percent listed themselves as first-generation. The meaning of “first-generation college student” varies, but the federal government defines such a student as one who has parents with educational attainment of a high school diploma or less, although one or both parents might have taken college courses.

John Q. Hodges, former head of WCU’s social work department, has examined a wide range of general research into first-generation students. Hodges, a first-generation student who attended the University of Utah, said research indicates that such students receive less financial support from their families than other students, but they tend to benefit from more emotional support from their families than other students. “There’s a lot of family strength there,” Hodges said.

One first-generation college student who benefited from that family strength is WCU’s interim provost, Linda Seestedt-Stanford. “Growing up as a child of immigrant parents on Detroit’s east side, within my circle of family and friends there were no college graduates and very few people with high school diplomas,” Seestedt-Stanford said. “But my parents had a plan, and my siblings and I were programmed to go to college and to value education. Paying tuition meant sacrificing other things, like a new car, color TV and a vacation, but my parents never complained. They placed having an education as a priority over worldly things. Being educated was valued almost as much as family.”

After observing WCU for more than 40 years, Chambers said he believes several factors have resulted in WCU’s reputation as a first-generation student-friendly campus, including its historically low cost and a rural setting that
students find “nonthreatening.” Also, Chambers said he and other first-generation students in Cullowhee have benefited from a faculty and administration that have looked favorably upon students in that situation. “Many of those faculty members and administrators, I suspect, were first-generation college students themselves and were attracted to work at Western Carolina because of that,” he said.

In past decades, lenient admissions standards also played a part in WCU’s reputation for being first-generation friendly, Chambers said, citing his own lack of college preparation in Wilkes County. “I had not taken the college preparatory curriculum, but they were willing to give me a chance based on rather weak preparation for college,” he said. However, that factor has disappeared in recent years as the university has raised its admission standards. “Some people may believe WCU is less friendly toward first-generation students now because of that, but I think it’s acceptable because back then we didn’t have the community college system,” Chambers said. “Now, students who aren’t as well-prepared can go to a community college to academically prove themselves, and then move on to a four-year institution.”

Beyond the statistics, there are the individual human stories of students trying to make it in college – those who don’t and those who beat the odds and earn their degrees. James Alan Goggins ’10 is one who did. Raised in a military family that moved frequently, Goggins graduated from high school in Harnett County and enrolled at a university in eastern North Carolina, but he immediately began to hit bumps on the road to a college degree. “I wasn’t focused or determined, and I didn’t do very well, and to top it off, my dad wound up being diagnosed with brain cancer at the end of my freshman year,” he said. “I transferred back home and started a community college program in nursing because I knew I needed to stay in school.”

Eventually, Goggins quit the community college program to help support his family when his father passed away. His college education remained in the doldrums until he watched his wife, Bessie Dietrich Goggins ’06 MA ’09, take her place among the graduating students during WCU’s commencement in December 2006. “I was sitting in the stands, waiting for Bessie’s name to be called and listening to the commencement speaker, who was also a graduating student, and he talked about his struggles as a blind college student,” Goggins said. “I was inspired, and told myself, ‘This is something I’ve wanted for a long time. If he can go out there and overcome his obstacles, then there’s nothing stopping me from overcoming mine.’ The next semester, I was enrolled at WCU.”

Goggins received his bachelor’s degree in environmental health in May after making his mark as a dean’s list student and talented undergraduate researcher. This fall, he is beginning his doctoral studies in biomedical sciences at Tulane University, where he has received a full scholarship. “To be a first-generation college student is, in my mind, the culmination of a lot of hard work and sacrifice – some by myself, but also the sacrifice my parents put into it and commitments they had to make to give me this opportunity,” Goggins said. “It means that I’m going to have a different lifestyle and more opportunities for jobs and life experiences than were available to my parents, and potentially, my kids will have better opportunities to go to college as well.”
Todd Murdock ’85 MAEd ’93 was a first-generation college student at WCU, and now his job involves counseling high school and middle school students who also have the potential to become first-generation college students.

Murdock is director of WCU’s Educational Talent Search Program, a federally funded initiative that identifies students in the seventh grade and follows them through high school graduation, providing academic, career and financial aid counseling while encouraging them to attend a postsecondary school of their choice. The students also have an opportunity to participate in Talent Search-sponsored outdoor and cultural programs throughout the year and, for high school students, to go on summer learning adventures to destinations such as Montana and Washington, D.C.

Murdock and his staff of counselors work with about 900 students in 11 target schools in the counties of Cherokee, Graham, Jackson and Swain, and in the Qualla Boundary, home of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Federal mandates stipulate that two-thirds of the students enrolled in Talent Search meet low-income criteria and also be in a “first-generation” situation; 75 percent of the students currently enrolled fit both categories.

Murdock said he can identify with the doubts and problems faced by those who are the first in the family to go to college – even when it comes to the basic function of registering for classes. “When I came to WCU for freshman orientation, I was having doubts about whether I could handle the academics, and I was thinking about taking less than a 15-hour load,” he said. “But my best friend’s father, who brought us to campus, counseled me and told me sternly, ‘You will be able to do this.’ That gave me the boost I needed. There are pivotal points in everyone’s young adult life, and that was one of those for me. If it had not been for him, I might not have graduated in four years.”

On a national basis, only about 28 percent of young people in a first-generation situation go to college, and only 11 percent of those students persevere and obtain a college degree. On the other hand, about 75 percent of the first-generation students enrolled in WCU’s Talent Search Program enroll in a community college or university. In a typical year, 100 to 120 Talent Search students will graduate from high school. About half of them enroll in four-year colleges, and about half of that group choose WCU.

Students from low-income, first-generation situations usually drop out of college for one of two reasons – because they are in debt or because they are not able to adjust to college on a social basis – and so the financial aid and college planning advice provided by Talent Search is critical, Murdock said.

For those students who might have trouble dealing with the social aspects of college, the free summer adventure and learning treks sponsored by Talent Search can be a big plus. Students have experienced hiking, cycling and paddling adventures along the path of Lewis and Clark to commemorate the bicentennial of those explorers’ famous journey across the West; they have been on a cultural and service trip to two Native American reservations in Montana; and this summer, a dozen students bicycled from Washington to Pittsburgh while visiting numerous historic sites, including landmarks of the Underground Railroad.

“The trips provide our kids with the experience of being engaged with a group,” Murdock said. “There’s no place to hide, and everyone gets the chance to be ‘leader of the day.’ When the students go on these trips and have a positive experience, it means they’re more likely to be engaged socially in college.”

Students ride along the historic Chesapeake & Ohio Towpath and visit Washington as part of WCU’s Educational Talent Search Program.
Freeman Owle ’76 MAEd ’78 commuted to Western Carolina University as a student, but that’s not the only reason his car was so important. His 1971 Volkswagen Beetle was his cafeteria, his study lounge and his break room.

“When the weather was cool enough, I’d sit there and do my studying and whatever else needed to be done,” Owle said. “And then I’d go back to class and return to my car when I had a break.”

As a Cherokee student at WCU in the 1970s, Owle was not alone, but he certainly felt that way. “I didn’t feel a part of anything,” said Owle, a historian, storyteller and teacher. He recalled a handful of other WCU students who also were enrolled members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, but nothing on campus bound those students to each other or called them to join social activities that college students typically enjoy.

Owle studied social work as an undergraduate, and he credits a faculty member with helping him through. “She checked in with me every day to see how I was doing,” he said. Some of his contemporaries were not as lucky. Owle remembers Eastern Band students simply walking away from campus in frustration, without explaining to faculty or staff why they were leaving.

A Long Tradition

The Qualla Boundary, also commonly referred to simply as Cherokee, is the homeland of the Eastern Band. While it’s a 30-minute drive from campus, culturally it’s a world away, and differences can challenge a student’s academic pursuits. “Cherokee is 25 miles down the road, and in some cases it seems further than that,” said Janina DeHart MS ’97, a staff member who formerly served as academic adviser.
for incoming Native American students. The connection with community and home is so strong among Eastern Band members that some students – even those with rooms on campus – have a tendency to spend most of their time at home.

“A lot of times they maintain those connections without forming new connections here on campus, and that partly is because they might not feel there are many places on campus to feel connected,” said DeHart, who believes the disconnected feeling can result in academic difficulty – not good news for a population with a historically high rate of attrition.

Cherokee-related academic programs have a strong history at WCU. The Cherokee Center, located in Cherokee since 1975, offers classes, advising and guidance through the academic process. Courses in Cherokee studies have long been available, with undergraduate and graduate concentrations. The Sequoyah Distinguished Professorship in Cherokee Studies, an endowed chair, was fully funded in 1998, and well-respected individuals have occupied the position. Oklahoma Cherokee Robert Conley, current Sequoyah Professor, is a prolific author of fiction and nonfiction. Conley recently was a guest at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, meeting and speaking with Native students there, and is incoming president of the Western Writers of America – the first Native American to hold the position. WCU’s culturally based Native health certificate program trains students to apply training in health-related disciplines to Native American cultures.

Perhaps the university’s strongest Cherokee-related academic offering is the Cherokee language program. Courses in the Cherokee language began in 1983, with some courses now transmitted to other universities in the UNC system. Faculty members work closely with the Eastern Band’s language immersion educators to train future teachers and produce source material printed in the Cherokee syllabary.

What’s been missing at WCU, many agree, is a social aspect promoting connections among Cherokee students and campus. Now WCU and its Eastern Band students are working to create a Cherokee and Native American social presence that is welcoming and promotes success, and Eastern Band students past and present say a new environment is taking hold.

Part of Something Bigger

The Judaculla House living-learning community, a residence in WCU’s Village specifically for Native American students or students with an interest in Native cultures, opened in 2008. “One reason we created the Judaculla House was to try to give students the feeling of having a place on campus,” said DeHart, adviser for the house.

“I loved living in Judaculla House,” said Patience Owl, a rising senior at WCU and an enrolled member of the Eastern Band. Judaculla House appealed to Owl because it meant being part of a group (and also meant sharing a bathroom with fewer people than in most residence halls). The house has attracted students from a variety of tribes, including Lumbee, Tuscarora and Blackfoot. “It’s a great learning opportunity for everyone,” Owl said.

Owl is leading the effort to begin a chapter of Alpha Pi Omega sorority, which calls itself the country’s oldest Native American Greek letter organization. With help from sorority members at UNC Pembroke, initiation should begin this fall, Owl said.

Coinciding with the opening of Judaculla House, the Native American student organization, Digali’i (the name means “we are all friends” in the Cherokee language), experienced a jump in membership to approximately 50. This was after years of stagnation, where advisers sometimes outnumbered students at meetings.

Energized, Digali’i members began organizing a flurry of activities, including a 2009 concert with Native American rapper Litefoot, a member of the Cherokee Nation who
advocates a drug-free lifestyle. "I wanted to bring someone here who could inspire Digali’i members and other students on campus," said senior Sky Kanott, then president of the organization. A 2009 Native American expo, co-coordinated by the student group, received such positive response that another is planned for November. Wanting a tangible display of Native pride, students commissioned large-scale artwork from renowned Eastern Band artist Joel Queen ’05 MFA ’09 for exhibit in Judaculla House, paid for by a grant from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation.

Recent efforts have experienced some setbacks. Fall 2010 will mark the third home for Judaculla House. It has moved to an eight-bed unit in the Village after not filling all the beds in a much larger space. (The new residence does not have space for the artwork, which will move to the Intercultural Center.) And by failing to comply with regulations regarding office hours, Digali’i lost its A.K.Hinds University Center office space.

The setbacks are mildly discouraging to Roseanna Belt, director of the Cherokee Center since 2001 and a member of the Eastern Band. With an undergraduate degree from the University of Colorado at Boulder and a master’s degree in counseling from Harvard University, Belt understands the experience of being Native on campus. "The first thing I did was find the other Indians," said Belt, who holds a certification in school counseling from WCU. She credits WCU’s growing Native American presence to a core group of hard-working students. "There are a lot of really cool things that have started," Belt said. But as those students approach graduation, she said, "I’m hoping we can get students of the caliber to keep it going." In an effort to cultivate engaged Native American students, DeHart will contact incoming students over the summer or soon after they arrive on campus to start making connections.

New Directions

Digali’i members organized another event in 2009: the inaugural Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Alumni Celebration, which took place over Homecoming weekend. The event was meant to “reach into WCU’s past and influence the future of Native Americans on this campus,” Kanott said. About 50 alumni gathered near the Judaculla House for a cookout with students and faculty members of WCU’s Cherokee-related academic programs.

The event took hold. A second alumni gathering, this one expanded with an invitation to all Native American alumni, is planned on campus for Saturday, Sept. 25 (also Mountain Heritage Day). Joyce Dugan ’75 MAEd ’81, former principal
chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and now director of education with Cherokee Central Schools, will be keynote speaker.

Conley, WCU’s Sequoyah Professor, is coordinating the dinner and plans to keep the Eastern Band students involved. “It’s important to keep alums and current students in touch with each other,” said Conley. “Knowing the alums and what they have done since their graduation is important for the students.” Patience Owl attended the first alumni event and agrees. “It was great to congratulate our alumni,” she said. “It just gives us hope that one day we can be alumni like them.”

Conley hopes a Native American alumni organization grows out of the event, and such an organization would include some notable members. Dugan’s efforts for the tribe and its members are well-respected in the community.

Dr. Frances Owl-Smith ’83 was the first female member of the Eastern Band to receive a medical degree; in 2006, she received WCU’s Alumni Award for Academic and Professional Achievement. Michell Hicks ’87 is principal chief of the Eastern Band. According to figures from the Cherokee Center, there are approximately 285 Eastern Band members who are WCU alumni.

As with many long relationships, the one between Western Carolina and the Eastern Band is complicated. The campus was once the site of a Cherokee village, and older Eastern Band members often bring into conversation an ancestral mound bulldozed to make way for the Killian Building. Though it occurred four decades past, the event still is fresh in a culture with a 10,000-year history. In 2005, the tribe and university administration formally pledged a commitment to work together to improve educational and economic opportunities. With the agreement, Hicks said at the time, the tribe and the university “have become true neighbors to each other.” Since then, they have signed additional agreements related to strengthening the Cherokee language and collaborating, along with Southwestern Community College, on an arts institute located on the Qualla Boundary.

Cherokee students continue to be a presence at WCU, but enrollment is less than what it has been in the past. In 2004, Brently “Tate” McCoy, a student in WCU’s master’s degree program in public affairs, became manager of the Eastern Band program overseeing higher education. McCoy advocated increased student accountability as well as implementation of a policy that sees tuition, room and board fully covered, with stipulations, at the institution of the student’s choice. There were 109 Eastern Band students enrolled at WCU in fall 2004, according to figures from the Eastern Band’s Higher Education and Training Programs; in spring 2010, that number was 42. (American Indian or Alaskan Native students that semester totaled 110, according to WCU figures.) More Eastern Band members are venturing farther from home, with students at Yale, Stanford and San Francisco State University. The tribe has memorandums of understanding with the University of Tennessee, East Tennessee State University, Lincoln Memorial University and Wake Forest University, and agreements with additional institutions are under way.

‘A Second Home’

WCU will always have a place among Eastern Band members, said Freeman Owle and Patience Owl. Cherokees feel a sense of ownership in WCU, said Owle, who spent three years as an elder-in-residence at WCU, serving as an adviser and point of contact to Native students. WCU is close to Cherokee, and that is important to a lot of Cherokee students. “They consider WCU part of the community, and they feel comfortable being there and know they can get a good education and also return home when they want to,” Owle said.

Owl said Judaculla House is ideal for young Eastern Band members wary of leaving home. “We thought having a second home at college would help kids want to finish high school and go on to bigger and better things,” she said. Owl reaches out to Eastern Band high school students to tell them about Judaculla House and Diga’i. “We started telling them there was a second home, and it wasn’t very far from their home, and they shouldn’t be afraid to venture out,” she said.

Both agree that higher education among its members is critical for the Eastern Band. “We are changing so quickly on the reservation that it’s vital for people to have at least a B.A. or B.S. degree,” Owle said. “We need educated leaders, and Western Carolina is a wonderful outlet for those needs.” Owle recalled the day he completed coursework toward his undergraduate degree as one of the greatest in his life. “Western was good for me,” he said. Owl concurs. A communication major, she is leaning toward a graduate degree in counseling. Owl is considering a number of schools, she said, but “I want to apply to Western, of course.”
Novel policies that reward faculty for work beyond traditional research and publications garner national attention as WCU embraces the Boyer model

By TERESA KILLIAN TATE

The more Mary Byrnes learned about Western Carolina’s innovative policies rewarding faculty for scholarship that may not be traditional research – especially work that benefits the community – the more the once-reluctant scholar felt she belonged at WCU. Byrnes was working as an urban planner in Detroit when she stopped to help an elderly woman who had fallen, spilling groceries across the sidewalk and into the gutter. Byrnes insisted on driving the woman home, only to discover she was living in a deteriorated house where the awning had collapsed over the front entrance. Barred, closed windows blocked gang and drug activity but locked in extreme heat. “It was a nightmarish scenario,” said Byrnes. She soon decided to become a scholar to develop solutions to problems older people face in their homes – solutions that could benefit entire communities.

“My scholarship has always been community-based. I’d be quite unhappy if I were only working through my research to make a contribution to my field through theory creation and academic cross-talk. That’s just really not why I became a scholar,” said Byrnes, an assistant professor of sociology now working on a project related to helping senior residents. “WCU’s incorporation of the Boyer model of scholarship was a strong pull in my decision to accept this position.”

In 2007, WCU became one of the first mid-sized institutions in the country to formally adopt the Boyer model in university-wide tenure policies. The move expanded the kinds of work faculty can submit to demonstrate their ongoing achievements as scholars when they apply to be named permanently to the faculty through the tenure process, or to be promoted or reappointed. The model was detailed by the late Ernest L. Boyer in his 1990 book, “Scholarship Reconsidered.” Boyer, then president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, reasoned that students lose when faculty are uniformly rewarded more for research and publications than for investing their time in teaching, counseling and advising. He also predicted that the nation would suffer without a renewed commitment to service in faculty reward systems. “At no time in our history has the need been greater for connecting the work of the academy to the social and environmental challenges beyond the campus,” wrote Boyer.

He outlined four kinds of scholarship: The “scholarship of discovery” included original research – often measured by research grants and academic publications. The “scholarship of teaching” included the systematic study of teaching and learning itself. The “scholarship of integration” involved the synthesis of information across disciplines, topics or time. The “scholarship of application” was the application of disciplinary expertise that produces results. He later described the “scholarship of engagement,” which related to applying university resources to address community problems.

Part of the benefit of this shift is to clarify the common principles of scholarly work that underlie faculty’s various responsibilities in teaching, research and service, said Pat Hutchings, senior associate with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. “Faculty are already very pressed on most campuses,” said Hutchings. “What they need is a way to integrate and connect their various roles and scholarly endeavors, not a mandate to do more.”

WCU’s incorporation of the Boyer model landed the university in the national media, from MSNBC to The Boston Globe to Inside Higher Ed. People from other institutions wanted to know more. “They ask, ‘How do you pull that off?’ They are generally very curious and sometimes a little skeptical,’” said Carol Burton ’87 MAEd ’89, assistant vice chancellor for undergraduate studies. “WCU’s incorporation of the Boyer model lanced the university in the national media, from MSNBC to The Boston Globe to Inside Higher Ed. People from other institutions wanted to know more. ‘They ask, ‘How do you pull that off?’ They are generally very curious and sometimes a little skeptical,’’ said Carol Burton ’87 MAEd ’89, assistant vice chancellor for undergraduate studies. This fall, WCU will share its experience as the sponsor of a retreat, “Integrating Boyer into Your Institutional Culture,” in Asheville from Sept. 19 to 23. The event will feature discussion of best practices; speakers including...
of scholarship into WCU's faculty handbook, the next step
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L. Coulter Faculty Commons for Excellence in Teaching
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department,” said Newton Smith, an English professor who
process at WCU varied tremendously from department to
tenure and promotion. “We soon realized the
was awarded tenure.
quality. “The
publication?” asked Houghton. What they did was send
text was adapted into the specific criteria of each
department’s collegial review documents. “The basic idea
of the Boyer model was something most faculty were ready
to accept fairly easily,” said Richard Beam, past chair of the
Faculty Senate and associate professor of theater. “The devil
was, as it usually is, in the details.”

Evolution of an Idea
Initially, Boyer's model was not fully embraced at WCU,
said Bruce Henderson, professor of psychology. “Most
of the time, scholarship is still equated with research and
publication on our campus,” wrote Henderson and now-
retired WCU management professor William Kane in a letter
“We have been surprised at the degree of resistance to the
broader notion of scholarship. And we are a comprehensive,
not a research, university.”

WCU started warming to the idea, however, and the need
to make at least some changes to the tenure process became
more pressing in 2001 with an unusual tenure application
submitted by Bob Houghton, then assistant professor
of elementary education with expertise in educational
technology. The exponentially rapid development of
the Internet in the 1990s had left Houghton, who had a
significant teaching load, with a difficult choice: Would
he invest his time in writing scholarly articles for refereed
(paper) journals, or in learning and publishing within the
(multimeda) Web? “I could not do both,” said Houghton.
So in his tenure application, he submitted some traditional
publications and, under the tenure application's provision
for "creative works," also some links to sites that showed
the tens of thousands of digital files and related creative
works he had created to help his students — future teachers —
become digitally literate.

“How would the tenure committee compare my work
to a 2,000-word article published in blind, peer-reviewed
publication?” asked Houghton. What they did was send
his materials to a peer in Houghton's discipline — a scholar
in Iceland — to review and remark on the quality. “The
committee was willing to take a chance that there was
something substantive in my work,” said Houghton, who
was awarded tenure.

Meanwhile, a Faculty Senate committee began
reviewing tenure and promotion. “We soon realized the
process at WCU varied tremendously from department to
department,” said Newton Smith, an English professor who
chaired the committee. After working with Rick Collings,
then vice chancellor of academic affairs and now president
of Southwestern Community College, and WCU’s Myron
L. Coulter Faculty Commons for Excellence in Teaching
and Learning, the committee turned to the Boyer model.
The concept fit well with WCU’s developing Quality
Enhancement Plan, “Synthesis: A Pathway to Intentional
Learning,” which formally committed WCU in 2007 to
helping students integrate their experiences in and out of
the classroom and become fully engaged with their learning
and their communities.

After the University of North Carolina Board of
Governors approved the incorporation of the Boyer model
of scholarship into WCU’s faculty handbook, the next step
academic Bocce Ball
As departments across WCU revised their criteria to
incorporate the Boyer model, they grappled with questions.
What kinds of new scholarship "products" would they
accept? Should the policies require faculty to submit at least
some traditional scholarship? Would faculty be competitive
for jobs at other universities if their scholarship at WCU was
nontraditional? How would it affect accreditation?
Quality was a big challenge. “How do you figure out if
engaged work that might fall under the ‘scholarship of
application’ is good?” asked Laura Cruz, interim director of
Coulter Faculty Commons. “Does a report for a community
organization carry the same weight as a peer-reviewed
article in a scholarly publication? If you do consulting work
for a local business, is the client just as qualified to assess
the quality of the work as an expert in the faculty member’s
field? It’s tricky.”

One faculty member compared the process at WCU to a
game of bocce ball with each unit trying to toss its ball closer
to the mark, resulting in a seemingly random constellation,
noted an article by WCU faculty members who studied
the resulting approximately three dozen Boyer model-
infused collegial review documents. Some documents
offered examples of nontraditional scholarship that would
be accepted, such as museum exhibits or sponsorship of
student research. One-third mentioned public service as
a desired emphasis. Some placed higher value on single-
author publications than those in fields such as business,
where networking and collaboration is critical. Some
classified public performances or work on accreditation
documents as scholarship, and others only as service.

Most included some mechanism for external review of
nontraditional scholarship. To qualify as scholarship as well
as service, work must be peer-reviewed, said Beth Tyson
Loquist ’78 MAEd ’79 EdS ’88, associate provost. When
a faculty member submits an article for publication to a
traditional scholarly journal, the work is blindly reviewed by
other scholars in the field and, if deemed worthy, published.
Tenure committees see that as a testament to the quality of
the work and count it as scholarship, said Loquist. With
the adoption of the Boyer model, each department had to
consider how to measure whether nontraditional work meets
rigorous standards reflective of scholarship. "In order for a
scholarly activity to move to the scholarship level, it must be
documented, subject to critical review, in a form allowing the
use and exchange by others members of a discipline, and
made available to the public,” said Linda Seested-Stanford,
interim provost.
The Kimmel School of Construction Management
and Technology, for instance, established a college-level
engagement committee to include at least one external
reviewer that would be convened for pre- and post-
evaluation of engaged work. “The scholarship of application
goes beyond the provision of service to those within or
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documents. “To be considered scholarship, there must be
an intellectually compelling and significant (consequential) application of disciplinary expertise with results that can be shared with and/or evaluated by peers.”

Henderson said creating processes to accept non-traditional scholarship took incorporating the Boyer model far beyond just including it in a mission statement. “It’s not easy to do,” he said. “It’s easy to count publications.”

Testing the Waters

Hutchings, whose Carnegie work has focused on the scholarship of teaching and learning, said new policies, which are often and necessarily quite general, must be brought to life by concrete cases and examples. “This takes time,” she said. And so far at WCU, no faculty member has won tenure primarily based on work that is now accepted because of the policy changes. Brian Gastle, head of the Department of English, said it can be hard for faculty to accept that work does not need to end up in a scholarly publication to count as scholarship.

One of the deterrents, perhaps, is that the Boyer model is not universally accepted beyond WCU, said Billy Ogletree, head of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. “For new faculty members working toward tenure, this can be an issue,” said Ogletree. “How do they want their scholarship to be perceived regionally, nationally or internationally? Will adherence to the Boyer model reduce their opportunities to be competitive in the job market? I address this by simply encouraging folks to be diverse with their scholarship and to include examples that are traditionally accepted in our discipline.”

This year, Lori Unruh, coordinator of the graduate program in school psychology, will submit in her tenure application examples of traditional scholarship as well as an example of nontraditional scholarship – a report from a research project that involved evaluating a beginning teacher support program. The report, which has been reviewed and evaluated by two peers at other institutions, noted findings that suggest where changes could be made to increase effectiveness, and it was shared with regional school systems. For Unruh, the project took just as much time – if not more – than her work on traditional journal publications. The difference was it was the kind of scholarship she enjoys most and believes could directly and immediately make a difference at schools.

Although integrating the Boyer model is still ongoing, WCU has emerged as a leader in the area through adopting new tenure policies and hosting the Boyer retreat. Chancellor John W. Bardo, who has long supported the incorporation of the Boyer model at WCU, predicted other universities will follow. “It will be necessary if higher education is to play its critical role in society in the future,” he said.

For WCU faculty, it came down to a matter of values, said Smith. “It represents the way we teach – with an eye toward applied research and engagement with the community,” he said. “Adopting the Boyer model showed courage on the part of the Faculty Senate, the faculty in general and the administration. But most of all, it is what we should be doing.”
Discussing the Boyer model of scholarship at Western Carolina University has made faculty members more thoughtful about their work. The following vignettes are not examples of work classified as “scholarship” at WCU under the new policies – at least not yet – but do illustrate how faculty members are honoring the values of discovery, integration, application and teaching.

**SPIRIT OF BOYER**

**PROTECTING PLANTS**

Biology faculty Kathy Gould Mathews and Beverly Collins designed a study of delicate high-elevation plant communities in Western North Carolina to explore not only the impact of climate change but also to help land managers know what they can do to protect heavily visited sites.

“If we were only interested in the scholarship of discovery, we might not have included the trampling aspect in the research – the amount of vegetation cover on the rocks – and focused only on climate change,” said Mathews. *(See related story on page 8.)*

**DEVELOPING ACADEMIC ENTERTAINMENT**

WCU faculty from communication, stage and screen, music and history joined forces last year on an academic entertainment project – researching, writing and staging a show on Veterans Day called “On the Home Front, Nov. ’44.” The live, historically accurate re-creation of the popular World War II radio show “Command Performance, USA!” took two years to research and fact check, said Don Connelly, head of the communication department.

Steve Carlisle ’73, the show’s director and associate dean of the Honors College, said the steps they took to be as historically authentic as possible ranged from not wearing modern watches to not using yellow highlighter on scripts. Bruce Frazier, WCU’s Carol Grotnes Belk Distinguished Professor of Commercial and Electronic Music, researched the music of the time as he prepared arrangements. Richard Starnes ’92 MA ’94, head of the history department, served as military historian and guided his students in preparing an exhibit. Susan Brown-Strauss, director of the theater and dance program, ensured all costumes, including a student's grandfather’s military uniform, were historically accurate for 1944.

The show was broadcast live on two radio stations, raised money for scholarships and later won two top awards at the Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts. Faculty illustrated each kind of scholarship described by Boyer through the process, said Connelly. "Unlike some of the work that gets tucked away in a journal the public never sees, ‘On the Home Front’ was shared with our community and our region,” said Connelly. *(See related story on page 28.)*
REVITALIZING A TOWN

Western Carolina faculty are assisting with revitalization efforts in Dillsboro, where tourism declined when the economy turned and declined again when the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad reduced trips to the town. In one initiative, public relations faculty guided students in planning a town marketing event called “Dillsboro on Display” and in teaching business owners to use tools such as Facebook and Twitter for marketing. In another, business faculty Sandy Grunwell, associate professor of hospitality and tourism, and Steve Ha, associate professor of economics, designed and conducted surveys of town merchants, WCU community members and Dillsboro visitors.

“This applied research has helped us understand the needs, attitudes and possible solutions,” said Betty Farmer, professor of communication and public relations, and special assistant to the chancellor for the Dillsboro-WCU partnership. “The Dillsboro partnership is a clear example of the scholarship of application.”

FIGHTING DISEASE

Brian Byrd, assistant professor of environmental health, designs his research of Western North Carolina mosquito species and the mosquito-borne illness La Crosse encephalitis with all four aspects of Boyer’s model of scholarship in mind. Byrd sees the scholarship of discovery in his search for new information, the scholarship of application in using discoveries to reduce the incidence of La Crosse encephalitis and the scholarship of integration to fully understand the complexities of mosquito-borne illness. “We approach the problem mostly from a biomedical or epidemiological perspective, but we require help from ecologists, geographic information specialists and human behaviorists,” said Byrd. He honors the scholarship of teaching as he conducts most of his research in collaboration with undergraduate students. “This requires an extraordinary amount of teaching effort,” he said.

ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS

In collaboration with the Center for Rapid Product Realization within the Kimmel School, WCU faculty members and students help community members solve problems that require engineering or technology expertise. The center’s projects range from helping a firm create a prototype of a part needed for a biomedical sensing device to assisting a company with fine-tuning a precision method for reproducing antique furniture.

Recently, Phil Sanger, associate professor of engineering and technology and director of the center, worked with Alesia Carpenter, coordinator of the regional simulation laboratory for the School of Nursing, and students to develop a prototype of a patient simulator embedded with sensors that measure the amount of pressure exerted on different parts of the body when a patient is moved. The goal of the project, developed in partnership with Wake Forest University School of Medicine and Winston-Salem State University, is to create a marketable tool to help medical professionals learn and practice the safest methods for positioning and handling patients to avoid the development of bedsores.
JOIN US FOR A WEEKEND OF FUN AT HOMECOMING 2010. For more information about the scheduled events, or to check on last-minute changes and additions, go online to alumni.wcu.edu. Questions? E-mail Marty Ramsey, director of Alumni Affairs, at mramsey@wcu.edu.
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 8

11 a.m. – Alumni Scholarship Homecoming Golf Tournament at Sequoyah National Golf Club near Cherokee. Shotgun start, four-person captain’s choice format. Cost is $85 per person and includes fees and cart. Refreshments available during play with a barbecue dinner to follow. RSVP required by Friday, Oct. 1. Call the Office of Alumni Affairs at 828.227.9990 or 828.227.7335 or e-mail magill@wcu.edu.

1 p.m. – The Last Lecture. Ted Chiappelli, associate professor of health sciences, presents “Missed Opportunities” in the theater of A.K. Hinds University Center.

3 p.m. – College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Awards and Reception in Hoey Auditorium. Call 828.227.7646 for more details.

6 p.m. – Soccer. Catamounts take on Georgia Southern at the Catamount Athletic Complex.

6:15 p.m. – Homecoming 2010 Main Street Parade. Cheer as community and student floats, WCU cheerleaders, Homecoming Court and the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band parade through downtown Sylva.

8 p.m. – Spirit Night. Immediately following the soccer match, join students, faculty, staff and alumni for a pep rally, music and food at the Catamount Athletic Complex.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9

9-11 a.m. – WCU Alumni Breakfast in the A.K. Hinds University Center Multipurpose Room. Reminisce about the good ol’ days with alumni and friends over a continental breakfast.

10 a.m.-noon – College of Business Open House in the Forsyth Building. Call 828.227.5303 or e-mail kmschoon@wcu.edu for details.

Noon-1:30 p.m. – College of Education and Allied Professions Alumni Lunch and Social in room 104 of the Killian Annex. Call 828.227.7311 or e-mail mrompf@wcu.edu for details.

Noon-2:30 p.m. – Tailgating prior to kickoff of the WCU vs. Samford football game.

12:30-2 p.m. – College of Health and Human Sciences Alumni Reception in Moore Hall. Call 828.227.7271 or e-mail gnicholson@wcu.edu for details.

1-2:30 p.m. – College of Arts and Sciences Pregame Reception. McKee Building lower parking lot. Call 828.227.7646 for details.

3 p.m. – Football. The Catamounts do battle against the Samford Bulldogs at Whitmire Stadium. For tickets, call 800.344.6928.

6-7 p.m. – WCU African-American Alumni Postgame Reception. Ramsey Center Hospitality Room. RSVP by Friday, Oct. 1, at 877.440.9990, 828.227.7335 or magill@wcu.edu.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10

3 p.m. – Inspirational Choir Concert. This crowd-pleasing event will help bring Homecoming Weekend to a close with a performance in the A.K. Hinds University Center Grandroom. For more information, contact the Office of Intercultural Affairs at 828.227.2276 or e-mail oes@wcu.edu.

4 p.m. – Soccer. Catamounts take on Davidson at the Catamount Athletic Complex.
Arthur Anderson (left, in an NBC studio in 1935) will star in a live radio show production of "A Christmas Carol" produced by Don Connelly (right, in a scene from WCU’s 2008 presentation of “The War of the Worlds”).
Theater of the Imagination

An upcoming production will feature a star from the golden era of radio

By SUSAN SHINN

Director Steve Carlisle, musical director Bruce Frazier and producer Don Connelly promise a once-in-a-lifetime event when they present the 1938 Campbell’s Playhouse radio classic “A Christmas Carol.”

The show will star Arthur Anderson of New York, who will reprise his role of the Ghost of Christmas Past when the show originally aired.

Carlisle is associate dean of the Honors College; Frazier is WCU’s Carol Grotnes Belk Distinguished Professor of Commercial and Electronic Music; and Connelly is head of the department of communication. The trio calls its productions academic-based entertainment; this is their third collaboration. They presented “The War of the Worlds” in 2008, the 70th anniversary of the original Orson Welles broadcast. “On the Home Front, Nov. ’44” was presented on Veteran’s Day 2009 and received national accolades from the Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts.

Like the first two shows, “A Christmas Carol” will raise money for student scholarships. The performance is presented through special permission of Campbell’s Soup.

Campbell’s Playhouse, founded in 1937 by Welles and John Houseman as the Mercury Theatre, was a part of the golden age of radio, Connelly said. “Imagine being able to listen to a World Series game as it was happening. Through World War II, radio was what kept people up to date. Radio was that generation’s television,” he said.

During his research, Connelly, who wanted to mount a production close to the holiday season, discovered that the script for “A Christmas Carol” was not readily available. His sleuthing led him to Indiana University, where many of Welles’ papers are kept. There in the files was Welles’ personal script. The library provided digital images of the script with the caveat that Connelly secure permission from Campbell’s.

Connelly’s research on the production was what led him to Anderson. “It’s just so incredible to have that resource,” Connelly said. “We can look at pictures and make assumptions, but Arthur was there.”

Anderson, now 87, was only 16 when he first played the Ghost of Christmas Past. He started in radio at age 12, after a friend of his mother’s recommended him for a role. “I needed cute little kids who could read lines,” said Anderson, who later provided the voice of Lucky the Leprechaun for Lucky Charms cereal commercials. “In those days, I didn’t have to look for work. It came to me.”

The work still comes to him. In late July, he had a crew in his Greenwich Village apartment, filming a three-and-a-half-minute movie with a group of experimental filmmakers from New York University. Although he was not familiar with WCU before Connelly’s call, the idea of a live radio show intrigued him. “I said to myself, ‘What a wonderful idea,’” he said. “We hope they will fill the theater.”

During his visit to WCU — his first trip to North Carolina — Anderson will present a seminar to students about his life and his experiences. “Actors always like to talk about themselves,” said Anderson, a walking encyclopedia of the early days of radio. Anderson will travel with his wife of 46 years, Alice, who worked in live radio and live television. “Radio is called the theater of the imagination,” Anderson said. “Radio involves you in the story.”

“A Christmas Carol” will be performed exactly as it was done in 1938, including live sound effects and an orchestra. Frazier is assembling vocalists and faculty musicians for piano, bass, drums, guitar, keyboard, strings and woodwinds.

Even over the summer, Frazier was working on the music a little bit every week. The show will begin with a 30-minute musical program, featuring traditional holiday music and favorites from the era. Frazier also is busy composing background music. “We’re trying to be as accurate as we possibly can,” he said.

Carlisle is charged with selecting a cast. He envisions a company of five or six to handle the dozen voices. He calls the production “somewhat daunting” but also characterizes it as a labor of love and an opportunity for faculty and staff to showcase their talents and abilities. “We are saying, ‘This is our work on the campus that we love and where we work,’” he said. “We’re working with history. This is something that you will see once in your lifetime. You will never see it again.”

The show must run exactly 60 minutes, so timing is everything. “The audience is watching a radio production. We don’t play to the audience. We play to the microphone,” Connelly said. “It’s a fun thing to do. What’s neat is to expose people to this unique form of storytelling.”

The project will have involvement from the departments of communication and English, the School of Music, School of Stage and Screen and Honors College. A number of students will be involved in behind-the-scenes support roles.

Susan Shinn is a writer based in Salisbury.
Members of the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band are hard at work practicing and rehearsing in preparation for their 2010 field show, “Rock U,” and for the music they will be performing in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif., on New Year’s Day. But they’re also putting in some time in the gym and on campus jogging trails to get in condition for the nearly eight miles of marching they’ll be doing Jan. 1.

“Although we incorporate a lot of movement into our halftime shows, it’s limited to 10 minutes, within the confines of a football field,” said Bob Buckner ’67, director of the Pride of the Mountains. “Marching seven and a half miles is another thing altogether, and it’s a big difference when you’re lugging around a 50-pound drum or sousaphone.”

That’s why the band is enlisting the assistance of the Campus Recreation Center to help develop conditioning plans for the marching musicians. “We always kick things off at band camp by providing basic fitness and nutrition tips, and that is on the agenda this year,” said Kellie Angelo Monteith, assistant vice chancellor for student affairs. “The
Members of the Pride of the Mountains are hitting the jogging track and pumping iron in the Campus Recreation Center to be ready for 7.5 miles of marching in Pasadena on New Year’s Day.

For the latest information on the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band’s trip to Pasadena, visit www.prideofthemountains.com. For information about corporate sponsorship to help the band defray the cost of the trip, contact Chris Mueller at 828.227.3052 or clmueller@wcu.edu.

BY THE NUMBERS
A look at how the band’s mileage adds up.

37 practice sessions x 2 miles of marching per session x 346 marching members of the band. Some members perform in “the pit” and do not actually march. = 25,604 miles

5 home football games x 1 mile of marching per game x 346 marchers. Mileage includes getting to and from the stadium and moving about during the halftime performances. = 1,730 miles

(2 days of Tournament of Champions practice x 6 miles per day x 346 marchers) + (1 day of tournament competition x 1 mile per day x 346 marchers) An annual invitational competition hosted by the Pride of the Mountains that attracts top high school marching bands from across the Southeast. This year’s event is scheduled for Thursday-Saturday, Oct. 14-16. = 4,498 miles

2 exhibitions x 1 mile each x 346 marchers. The band will participate in exhibition shows in Enka and Atlanta this fall. = 692 miles

1 Homecoming parade x 1-mile route x 362 marchers Members of the band who don’t march during football games will march in the Homecoming parade through downtown Sylva, scheduled for Friday, Oct. 8. = 362 miles

1 weeklong summer band camp x 27 miles x 346 marchers. The Rose Parade conditioning started early! = 9,342 miles

3 extra practices x 7.5 miles per practice x 380 marchers. Parade marchers will step to it during additional fall and winter practice sessions. = 8,550 miles

51 days without practice x 2 miles per day x 380 marchers. If band members meet the minimum amount of exercise they are encouraged to take on days without practice. = 38,760 miles

1 Rose Parade x 7.5-mile route x 380 marchers = 2,850 miles

FOR A GRAND TOTAL OF = 92,388 miles

campus recreation and wellness staff are ready to help the band members however we can so they are ready to represent the university with pride during the rigors of the long march.”

In addition, band students on campus over the summer organized their own activities ranging from group walking sessions by the Color Guard to ultimate Frisbee competitions by the trumpet section, Buckner said. And while members of the Pride are doing sit-ups and crunches, staff coordinators Billie Jeanne Curns and Adam Stewart have been crunching the numbers to calculate the total number of miles the band will march in 2010-11.

“We had been talking about getting pedometers for the band this year, and we became curious about how far we thought the band would march in a season,” said Stewart, a senior from Rockwell. “We started with what we expected a regular practice would contain, and let the numbers grow from there.”

By the time the Pride of the Mountains finally gets a chance to put up its collective feet on the flight back from California, it will have hiked for a grand total of – drum roll from Purple Thunder, please – 92,388 miles. “This is the same as if the band were to march along the N.C. state perimeter 71 times, go from Cullowhee to Pasadena 39 times, walk the Great Wall of China 16 times, or march around the Earth three and a half times,” said Curns, a senior from Hayesville. “We were blown away by the numbers we finally found.”

“That’s a lot of ground to be covered during the next few months,” Buckner said. “That’s why we are encouraging our students to exercise at least two miles a day on the three days a week we don’t have official band activities, whether it’s walking around campus in between classes, working out in the gym, or getting involved in games with their section.”

In reality, those numbers are actually a little low, said Matt Henley ’93 MA ’95, assistant band director. In the wake of the band’s selection for the Rose Parade, student interest has skyrocketed, and this year’s Pride of the Mountains will contain a whopping 446 members (at press time) – the 380-person Pasadena-bound Gold Band full exhibition unit, and 66 alternate members in the Purple Band. “The growth of the band is just absolutely insane,” Henley said. “Splitting it into Gold and Purple units was the only way we can accommodate everyone. But as problems go, it’s a good one to have.”
Six former Catamount athletes with ties dating from the 1950s through the present make up the 2010 Western Carolina Athletics Hall of Fame class, which will be inducted during festivities surrounding the final Catamount football home game, Saturday, Nov. 13. The 21st such grouping in WCU history includes former student-athletes from three sports.

Tom Bodine '95 (1991-94), one of three linebackers named to the Western Carolina All-20th Century team in 2000, becomes the third such defender to earn a spot in the Hall of Fame, joining counterparts Louis Cooper '87 (1981-84) and Steve Yates (1971-74). The all-time leader in tackles in Catamount football history with 453, Bodine led the Catamounts in total hits from 1991 through 1993 to be the only Catamount dating back to 1976 to have led the squad in tackles for three consecutive seasons.

A native of Pickens, S.C., Bodine finished with 30 tackles-for-loss, seven sacks and three interceptions, starting 44 games during his four-year career. He was a three-time All-Southern Conference linebacker, garnering first-team accolades in 1993 and 1994. During his senior year, Bodine was selected preseason Southern Conference and NCAA I-AA National Defensive Player of the Year, earning honorable mention as a 1994 All-America selection by The Sports Network.

The involvement of Tobe Childers (1957-60) with WCU spans more than a half a century, from his playing days as a quarterback for the Catamount football team to a benefactor and fundraiser for student-athletes ever since. One of his most vocal and visible accomplishments was the founding of “the Herd,” an unofficial support group composed of football alumni with membership totaling more than 120.

During an era in which passing was the exception, not the norm, Childers completed 72 percent of his pass attempts, tossing only four interceptions in his four-year career. He was instrumental in WCU’s 7-2-1 overall record in 1959, also guiding the school to a winning record (6-5) in 1960. In recent years, Childers has been a driving force behind several athletics fundraising initiatives through the Catamount Club, serving two terms as president. For his efforts, Childers received the 2007 Southern Conference Distinguished Service Award for Western Carolina.

Kerry Hayes '96 (1991-94) was one of the best all-around athletes in WCU football history as a wide receiver and kick returner. With 975 yards on punt returns, 2,058 yards on kickoff returns, and 2,608 receiving yards, Hayes continues to hold the WCU all-purpose-yards career record with 5,617 while also holding the markers for most yards per play in a game (47.5), season (21.8) and career (19.2).

Hayes is one of just six Catamounts all-time to garner first-team All-Southern Conference accolades three or more times, doing so in 1992, '93 and '94. He also was a two-time All-America selection by the Associated Press. In 2000, the Camden, S.C., native was named to WCU’s All-20th Century team as a kick returner. He led the team in both kickoff and punt return yardage from 1991 through '94, setting seven SoCon and four NCAA I-AA records for kick returns, including scoring seven touchdowns on returns.
Anquell McCollum ‘01 (1992-96) has been the face of the modern era for WCU men’s basketball since the early 1990s. The leader of WCU’s first-ever men’s Southern Conference Championship basketball team in 1996, McCollum returned to Cullowhee in 2007 as an assistant coach, a role he continues today.

McCollum was a first-team all-conference selection in 1995 and ’96, also winning all-freshman plaudits in 1993. He is one of just four former Catamounts to have ever earned SoCon Player of the Year accolades. During the magical 1996 season – which saw the Catamounts rebound from a 3-10 start to win 14 of their final 16 games and nearly shock top-seeded Purdue in the NCAA tournament – McCollum led the SoCon in scoring and ranked sixth nationally with a 25-points-per-game average. He finished as WCU’s career 3-pointers leader with 245, a mark surpassed in 2009-10 by Jake Robinson ’10 while Assistant Coach McCollum cheered him on.

Gaston Seal ’64 MAEd ’72 (1960-63) was a four-year starter on the men’s basketball hardwood from 1960-63 as a part of Catamount teams that combined to win 80 games. Seal was among the starting five on teams that claimed the Carolina’s Conference Championship in 1962 with a 21-8 record. He also started for the team that won a school-record 28 games and advanced to the NAIA National Championship in 1963, finishing as national runner-up with a 28-7 ledger and earning Hall of Fame induction in 2003.

Seal, who continues to rank sixth in the school’s record books with 681 career rebounds, will join former teammates Danny Tharpe ’65, Mel Gibson ’63 MAEd ’67, Tommy Lavelle ’64 (2000) and Darrell Murray (2006) in the WCU Athletics Hall of Fame. A resident of Glenville, Seal has remained a significant financial contributor to WCU and is a longtime backer of Catamount athletics through the support of the Catamount Club.

Rebecca Twiner Hastings ’04 (2000-04) is the first women’s golfer to be inducted into the Athletics Hall of Fame. Twiner was instrumental in initiating the success the WCU women’s golf program has enjoyed over the past 10 years. The Crystal River, Fla., native was among the first women to break the 70-seasonal scoring average barrier and ranks 11th on WCU’s all-time career scoring charts (78.87).

A team leader and All-Southern Conference selection on the Catamounts’ first SoCon championship squad in 2003, Twiner was the first women’s golfer since 1997 to win a multiround tournament, taking individual medalist honors at the Belmont Lady Bruin Invitational in September 2001. She additionally picked up All-SoCon honors in 2004 on a team that finished second in the league championship. Twiner, who earned the team’s player of the year honor after her rookie season in 2000, finished in the top 10 in 12 career events, including twice claiming individual tournament titles.

To be inducted into the Athletics Hall of Fame this fall are, from left, Kerry Hayes ’96, Rebecca Twiner Hastings ’04, Tom Bodine ’95, Gaston Seal ’64 MAEd ’72, Tobe Childers and Anquell McCollum ’01.
New coaches are at the helm of the men’s and women’s golf programs

By DANIEL HOOKER ‘01

New head coaches are getting into the swing of things this fall for the men’s and women’s golf programs at Western Carolina. Joining the athletics program to lead the women’s golf team is Mallory Hetzel while assistant men’s golf coach Carter Cheves has been promoted to the top of the leader board.

Hetzel was a four-year letter-winner for the University of Georgia, where she bookended her collegiate career by twice earning All-America and All-Southeastern Conference plaudits on the links. She replaces retired head coach Steve Lott, who guided the program to a pair of conference championships and earned three league coach-of-the-year honors during his 12-year tenure.

“Mallory Hetzel is an outstanding person with integrity, character and tremendous potential. Her strong commitment to academic and athletic excellence are the primary reasons we felt she would make the perfect fit for our women’s golf program,” said Jennifer Brown, WCU senior woman administrator, who spearheaded the search committee.

A 2009 graduate of the University of Georgia’s Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, Hetzel takes over a women’s golf program coming off a very successful season highlighted by four team championships and three players honored by the Southern Conference, including returning All-SoCon selection Josefine Sundh and All-Freshman team honoree Malin Jansson.

On the men’s side, Cheves takes over for former head coach Gorham Bradley ‘04, whom he aided through the 2009-10 season, as Bradley assumed a full-time role within the Catamount Club. He becomes just the third head coach since 1991, joining Bradley and WCU Hall of Famer Johnny Wike.

“While working as the assistant men’s golf coach at Western Carolina over the past year, Carter Cheves has shown a genuine interest and concern for the success of every student-athlete, which made him a strong choice for our next head men’s golf coach,” said Brown.

Cheves came to Cullowhee as an assistant coach prior to the 2009-10 season, where he worked side by side with Bradley, helping with daily practice plans and coordinating many aspects within the program such as team travel. He is a 2008 graduate of UNC Wilmington, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in business operations in 2008.

WCU returns four members from last year’s men’s squad, which will be joined by a four-member incoming freshman class considered among the best in school history. “I am very grateful for the opportunity to stay at Western Carolina University and continue with the men’s golf program,” said Cheves. “I look forward to working with our young men, helping them succeed both on and off the golf course.”
A new student-run scoreboard will broadcast Catamount football highlights

By SUZANNE RAETHER

Catamount football fans will have more to look forward to than the Battle for the Old Mountain Jug this fall, as a new student-operated video scoreboard is scheduled to take the field in 2010. A 48-strand fiber-optic cable connects the scoreboard, towering above Bob Waters Field beside the Ramsey Regional Activity Center, to a television studio in the Center for Applied Technology. With images captured by cameras on the field, people in the stadium will be able to see the action come to life on the big screen.

Western Carolina supporters had previously committed $103,000 toward the purchase of a $500,000 scoreboard, which prompted a lead gift from the Pepsi Co. as part of negotiations to become the university’s soft drink provider last year. Those funds, combined with other private commitments, made purchase of the new scoreboard possible during the off-season. “We are excited about the project and think this will be a very positive experience for the players and students,” said Chip Smith, director of intercollegiate athletics.

Installed over the spring and summer, the scoreboard boasts a video display measuring 17 feet by 32 feet and displays video for live shots, instant replay, messaging and graphics. Keeping up with information-based culture is what fans and players want, said Steve White ’67, former sports information director. “Having the scoreboard says that Western Carolina is first-class in operation. It’s going to please fans and players alike,” White said.

Head Football Coach Dennis Wagner agreed. “The new video scoreboard is very impressive,” Wagner said. “Our players are excited about having it as a part of our facility, and it will help create a better atmosphere on game day.”

The new scoreboard will not only be a treat for the football team and fans, but it also is a chance for students to get real-world television production experience. Students registered for “TV Production II,” a course taught by Mark Mattheis, assistant professor of broadcasting, will be the work crew for the five home games this season. “It will take 10 to 12 students to run each game,” Mattheis said. “Their jobs will include directing, technical directing, graphic creation, audio, slow-motion playback, editing and camera operation.”

For communication majors, the class is an ideal hands-on learning experience. “The students involved in the production of the game will get live feedback on their abilities as broadcasters,” Mattheis said. Utilizing the new scoreboard as a teaching tool is in keeping with the university’s Quality Enhancement Plan, which helps students create connections between what they learn inside and outside the classroom.

The scoreboard also is a major step in a larger campus television production effort, and WCU plans to grow the fiber-optic network to encompass the Fine and Performing Arts Center and the Ramsey Center. “This is truly a unique relationship and partnership between athletics and academics, and the fiber-optic interconnectivity opens the door to many other possibilities in the future,” said Mattheis.

Students involved with a Society of Broadcast Engineers certification class, taught by new faculty member Gabe Nucci, will assist with signal processing and quality control. Nucci joins the teaching faculty fresh from working soccer’s World Cup this summer. Nominated for several Emmy Awards and winner of one for his work in the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, Nucci has worked as a production engineer for the Athens, Torino and Vancouver Olympics, the Super Bowl, World Series and Indianapolis 500, among other major sporting events.

Suzanne Raether is a professional writing graduate student from New Orleans.
The state budget for the 2010-11 fiscal year approved by the General Assembly over the summer held an unexpected – and unpleasant – surprise for the Western Carolina athletics program. As part of an effort to close a massive budget shortfall, legislative budget-writers eliminated a special talent waiver provision that allowed University of North Carolina system athletics departments to charge in-state rates for out-of-state student-athletes on a full scholarship.

Although the move is expected to trim $9.4 million from the state budget, it also has UNC campuses scrambling to fill a large budget hole. For WCU, the loss totals about $625,000 of a total scholarship budget of $2.4 million for 2010-11, said Chip Smith, director of athletics.

“This presents a serious problem in that those scholarship commitments have been made in good faith to hundreds of student-athletes,” Smith said. “At this time, it is our intent to fulfill those promises. However, we must find ways to absorb this significant budget reduction, both this year and into the future.”

Legislators have been discussing elimination of the tuition waiver as a cost-cutting measure for the past couple years, leading Smith to develop a three-year plan to enable the athletics department to phase out the tuition waiver and identify new sources of funding to take its place. “Unfortunately, this has happened much more quickly than we anticipated,” Smith said.

To help make up the difference, the department will undergo some serious belt-tightening. One position has been cut and the duties distributed elsewhere among the staff, and other reductions are possible. “We will look at everything to find ways to reduce expenses and increase revenues as much as possible this year,” Smith said. “We will have more flexibility after this year, since we can adjust scholarship offers as necessary.”

There is some good news on the fiscal front, however, as total giving to the Catamount Club crossed the $1 million threshold for the third consecutive year, with contributions for the Catamount Club Scholarship Fund topping $400,000 for the first time; however, all but about $4,000 of that amount already was earmarked for scholarships. The club now boasts 813 members, including 317 new members who signed up during the past year.

“I have received many calls about this issue from Catamount Club members expressing disappointment and asking what can be done to meet our needs. I feel confident our fans and supporters will step up,” said Smith.

“We have made much progress in the past several years. No one wants to slow the momentum we have built. Neither should we lower our standards or principles in overcoming this obstacle. The difficulty we face is as much a test of our commitment to the purpose of Western Carolina athletics as it is a financial burden,” he said.
GAME-CHANGING TURNOVER
A former athlete helps others transition from prison to society
By AMANDA MERRICK

By day, Toren Gordon was a good student and football player at Western Carolina University. “But at night I was selling drugs. I was drinking alcohol, and I was carrying a weapon,” said Gordon, who played for the North Gaston High Wildcats before college.

In December 2001, a fight broke out at a nightclub in Maggie Valley. Some people, including Gordon, started shooting, and a 29-year-old Asheville man was shot and died. Gordon was charged with second-degree murder. He was one semester short of finishing college. “Then I was sitting in the Haywood County jail under a $500,000 bond,” Gordon said.

In May 2002, Gordon was sentenced to six-and-three-quarters years in prison on a manslaughter conviction. While in prison, Gordon began corresponding with Friendship Christian Church Bishop John McCullough. Gordon asked McCullough what services were available once he finished his prison sentence. “There weren’t very many, if any, in Gaston County,” said Friendship Christian Church Elder Justin Ross.

Gordon was released from prison in 2007, and since July 2009 has been director of Life Bridge, a program that assists men released from prison with the resources they need to get a job, be self-sufficient and avoid a life behind bars.

At Life Bridge, an initiative of community development corporation Fresh Start of Gaston County, men receive a place to stay, transportation, clothing, food, mentoring and individual services. Four men stay at the home, which opened in August 2009.

“The first 30 days is the most intense part of it,” Gordon said. “The first month out is so important.” During that month, residents can receive phone calls only from family as they concentrate on finding a job. “We’re making our communities in the county safer when we provide a man who has a criminal history a place to lay his head,” Gordon said.

Residents stay from six to nine months and can be approved for an extension depending on circumstances. Lloyd Ulrich, released from the Charlotte Correctional Center in November 2009, is among the men who have lived at the Life Bridge home. Ulrich learned about the program while incarcerated, applied, and was approved.

“People are scared to death of felons,” said Ulrich, who was convicted of obtaining a checking account by false pretenses. Now his goal is to save enough money to move back to Florida, where he’s originally from and where he has family.

The group prefers to help men ages 18 to 34 but will take applications from those who don’t fit that age range. Life Bridge will not accept sex offenders because the community has a lot of young people and a day care, Ross said.

Rule violations aren’t tolerated and are addressed as soon as they occur. “There are no second chances. “You’re out and it’s done,” Gordon said.

Life Bridge’s goal is to reduce the recidivism rate in Gaston County by at least 50 percent. “It is realistic to be able to do that,” Ross said. “But if there isn’t anything for these men to do, they will do what comes naturally and they will do what comes easily.” That’s why the group needs community support, they say.

It costs an average of $75 a day to house a prisoner in North Carolina, according to the N.C. Department of Correction. “We can house him for $50 or maybe $45,” Gordon said. “The thing is, if they go into the prison system, it is going to be at the expense of you.”

The organization runs on private funds, grants and donations, including contributions from Friendship Christian Church when needed, Ross said.

In the future, Life Bridge plans to reach 115 men through a navigation program, a type of case management for men who have a place to stay but need help finding a job and getting assistance. They hope to have more houses where 16 to 32 men can reside.

Life Bridge also recently started a cleaning and lawn-care business specializing in vacant properties that has successfully employed program participants. “Its primary purpose is to assist the men who are in transition with self-esteem and on-the-job professionalism,” said Gordon, who married and found work while incarcerated. “Employment is a great recidivism reducer, and we are now able to do just that. In our first year of operation, we have had only one of 12 return to prison.”

Life Bridge hopes it can work with others wanting to rehabilitate ex-prisoners. Instead of starting up another group, Gordon hopes people will consider partnering with Life Bridge. “We would do so much more together than standing alone,” Gordon said.

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For information about Ears To Our World, visit www.etow.org.
ALL EARS

Radios are a source of information and comfort to the world's underserved

By MAGGIE TOBIAS

Cameroon, Uganda, Belize, Haiti, Kenya: Those are just a few countries whose residents can now tune in to information from around the globe thanks to the efforts of Thomas Witherspoon ’96, founder of Ears To Our World, a nonprofit organization that supplies windup radios to teachers in developing countries. “Our mission is to support anyone who doesn’t have access to information,” Witherspoon said.

The idea for Ears To Our World was born in 2007, along with twins girls delivered prematurely by Witherspoon’s wife, Heather Pittillo ’90. Witherspoon gave up a position with a statewide community development bank to join his wife in caring for the girls full time. “I decided I wanted to stay home and help take care of the twins,” he said. “I wasn’t working anymore, and for the first time, I could actually think, and I had all these ideas bubble up.”

Witherspoon conceived ETOW after reading an article about an organization that raised money to install solar panels on a school in Thailand. He had loved radio since childhood, and the article influenced him to combine that love with aid work. He told his plan to his wife, who said she initially wasn’t sure he was serious. “First I thought it was a joke, so I was preparing mentally for the punch line, but it never came,” Pittillo said. “But after he described his concept for a charity, I said, ‘That’s the best idea you’ve ever had. We’re going to be poor forever, but let’s do it.’”

Witherspoon contacted his friend Fred Osterman, owner of radio retailer Universal Radio, who was immediately ready to lend a hand. Also with the help of Nyaga Mwaniki, a WCU associate professor of anthropology doing research in Kenya, Witherspoon sent two self-powered, shortwave radios to Kenya, giving the first one to a teacher in Kibera, one of the largest slums in Africa. Since then, they’ve sent several more radios to Kenya and continue to serve rural schools there.

After the maiden voyage of ETOW, the project expanded quickly. ETOW began partnering with other U.S. aid organizations already working in places they wanted to reach. In Mozambique, it joined with Books for Kids to give radios to young teachers in rural areas. It started similar programs in Uganda, Sudan and Cameroon.

As the scope of its aid grew, so did their need for supplies. “I called Fred one day and said we needed more radios,” Witherspoon said. They decided to contact the radio manufacturer, Esmail Amid-Hozour, CEO of Eton Corp. “Next thing I know, a truck’s coming with 500 radios to fuel us. He got right on board,” Witherspoon said.

Since then, he has had no trouble attracting publicity and volunteer service. “I think people in the media understand the power of news and information and the importance of getting access for people who don’t have it,” said Witherspoon, whose ETOW was featured this spring in the Magazine from the Wall Street Journal.

ETOW’s radios have three main purposes: educating, informing and providing disaster relief. Witherspoon said a teacher in Romania is learning French through her radio. She also plays news broadcasts for her students to give them a taste of the larger world. “The kids clamor to get the radio to be the one to wind it for the day,” he said.

In addition to hearing programs such as BBC World Service, recipients of radios will soon be able to listen to original broadcasts Witherspoon is developing that will cover topics such as family planning and hygiene.

Although it wasn’t his original purpose, Witherspoon’s radios became vital tools in disaster relief for Haiti. After the Jan. 12 earthquake, ETOW sent about 600 radios to Haiti. Cullowhee United Methodist Church helped organize, test and package the radios, which were used by Haitians to find sources of food and water and to clear up misinformation about aftershocks. “Radio is super, super important there,” he said. “There were people saying they’d rather have information than food. It gives them a sense of control in an out-of-control situation.”

Witherspoon has plans to continue disaster relief in Haiti and possibly start partnerships in Tanzania and Malawi. He also hopes the organization can raise enough money to be able to pay some staff members. He is considering a pen-pal program between U.S. and foreign students. Lately, Witherspoon has been working to bring radios to blind children in Belize.

“It’s world-opening to them,” Witherspoon said. “When I was in Belize, there was a blind child who had a hard time communicating. This child, although bright, recently had multiple strokes and was nonresponsive. I was worried that he might not benefit from the radio. I turned on the radio for the first time, and there was this music, and he just lit up.”

Experiences like this are what keep Witherspoon passionate about ETOW. It isn’t easy managing a nonprofit while raising twins and building a new home in Swannanoa, doing much of the work himself. But Witherspoon has a strong support group. “The family support has made all this possible. Heather’s intimately involved with all the operations,” Witherspoon said. “Our kids, I think their first multisyllable word was radio.”

Pittillo helps behind the scenes by answering e-mail, editing material for the organization website and writing occasional articles. “It is a little bit of a family enterprise,” she said. “I’m moral support for a husband who’s out on a limb doing his own thing. Tommy and I, we have this pact that we’ll live this frugal life to do what we love to do.”

Reprinted in edited form with permission of The Sylva Herald.
Matt Barker ’00 and Matt McClain ’98, along with two friends, transformed their love of extreme sports in 2003 into a business that designs and produces a range of all-terrain boards that look like a monster truck version of a skateboard. Based in Greenville, S.C., Ground Industries manufactures products for mountain-boarding, dirt-boarding, kite land-boarding and longboarding – products with names like Bomber and Terraintula Hubs.

The first year for Barker and McClain revolved around reinventing the wheel, so to speak, and the result was a now-patented mechanism called a “Bionic truck.” A steering device, it helped set Ground Industries apart from the competition, and its founders kept on developing new designs to achieve specific, performance-oriented goals, said McClain, who majored in business management and is president of the company. Barker, who majored in parks and recreation, works in research and development for the company. “We looked at every component of the board and found ways to improve them,” said McClain. “We are known for our technologies from tire tread design to deck construction.”

The sport of all-terrain boarding is growing, and Ground Industries, which distributes in 30 countries, is growing with it. “I love the pioneering aspect of our business and being able to create something that allows people to recreate and have fun,” said McClain. “I also love not being limited to when I can ride. As a snowboarder, I am lucky to ride five times a year, but as a mountain-boarder I can ride every day if I choose.”

Last year, Ground Industries built High Ground mountain bike and mountain-boarding park at Beech Mountain Resort in Western North Carolina to give enthusiasts another place to play. The park features elements ranging from a 30-foot vertical wall to 20- to 30-foot tabletop jumps as well as multiple jib and skill features. Riders slide down the rails of what McClain calls the battleship bridge.

The park’s success inspired McClain to help develop a new business called Ride Garden that specializes in building sustainable trails for mountain biking and mountain-boarding. “We take an extremely green approach,” said McClain, who also works with Ride Garden. “We try to recycle and reuse resources from the site and have certified specialists on our team with expertise in storm water and erosion control. We want to really harness the natural resources and have a gardenlike atmosphere and aesthetic. We want to build more places people can snowboard in winter and mountain-board in summer.”

GAINING GROUND
A mountain-boarding business founded by two alums is taking off

By TERESA KILLIAN TATE

Matt Barker ’00 (left) and Matt McClain ’98 (right) are founders of Ground Industries, an all-terrain boards and products company that also spawned High Ground mountain bike and mountain-boarding park (above).
A career in law enforcement didn’t exactly prepare Gary Lewallen ’04 to executive produce a feature film, but his crowd control skills might come in handy as he debuts the movie up and down the East Coast.

When Lewallen, a member of WCU’s first online criminal justice cohort, retired as chief of police in the town of Archdale in 2009 after 34 years of service, he promptly turned his attention to promoting “Red Dirt Rising,” an independent film inspired by his father. Set in the 1940s, the movie follows the lives of three men instrumental to the beginnings of stock car racing, including Jimmie Lewallen. “A lot of the things I did with this movie were based on memory and family and people my dad associated with,” said Lewallen, whose father died in 1995. Jimmie Lewallen, born in 1919, grew up in the Piedmont, and like many others, fell in love with fast cars by running moonshine. He competed throughout the Southeast in the days before NASCAR, and after the organization’s formation competed in what is now its Sprint Cup Series. After Gary was born, the senior Lewallen reduced his racing schedule but continued to run local tracks, often taking his son with him.

Lewallen worked closely with the movie’s directors and writer, and enlisted investors to raise the movie’s $600,000 budget. Filming took place in the Archdale area, where Gary Lewallen was born and raised. James Suttles of Pisgah Forest, who produced and directed the film with Kathleen Bobak of Florida, whose credits include “The Last of the Mohicans” and “Titanic,” was impressed with the project’s community support. “I think everyone Gary knows was on the set at some point,” Suttles said. “There was no request he couldn’t answer, no matter how wild or unusual. That’s probably what made him successful as a police chief and as the executive producer of a movie.”

“Red Dirt Rising” premiered at the North Wilkesboro Speedway in May with an event that included races, a concert and appearances by the movie’s actors. (Cast members R. Keith Harris Jr. ’92 and Ben Mabry ’76 also are WCU alumni.) Approximately 4,000 people attended the premiere, a huge number for an independent film. Since then, the movie has shown at tracks and festivals in North Carolina, Tennessee, New York and Iowa. There are plans to kick off the DVD release at the Mountain Moonshine Festival in Dawsonville, Ga., in October. “There are so many things being thrown at me that I’m having a hard time keeping up,” Lewallen said.

He looks forward to the day he can direct film proceeds toward the Racing Legends Medical Hardship Fund, a nonprofit organization founded in 1991. Lewallen said supporting the organization, which assists former drivers and others involved in racing, was a prime motivator in making the movie. Lewallen is the hardship fund’s chairman, a position held previously by his dad.

For more information, visit www.reddirtrising.com.
Although Rachel Reilly ’07 gained a sorority of sisters while earning her chemistry degree at Western Carolina University, she may not have predicted her current situation as a contestant on “Big Brother,” a reality television show in its 12th season.

Victoria Burleson ’10 remembers Reilly as not only a friend but a Phi Mu sorority sister. “She is so much fun and there’s never a dull moment with her,” said Burleson. Whether Reilly’s in Western North Carolina, in Las Vegas or on “Big Brother,” “Rachel is a wonderful, loving, free-spirited and fun person,” she said. "Rachel is a rock star.”

One fellow WCU alumna discovered on Facebook that Rachel was going to be on “Big Brother.” “I used to watch ‘Big Brother’ during the first and second seasons and actually enjoyed the show to an extent,” Bethany Rae Saindon ’07 said. “I then decided I would begin watching again because I knew Rachel.”

Reilly became sequestered from the outside world to contend in the competitive show, which is based on a group of strangers, known as HouseGuests, who live together 24 hours a day with no privacy for three months. The participants compete for the chance to win a $500,000 grand prize by avoiding weekly eviction, until the season’s final guest claims the prize.

Cynthia Atterholt, department head of chemistry and physics, recalls Reilly’s traits while a student at WCU, many of which may help Reilly during her time in front of the camera. "Rachel is a very personable young woman, and she worked hard as a WCU student,” Atterholt said. “She had determination and perseverance.”

To win the prize, Reilly believes she must play a game of strategy and deception. During a preshow interview, Reilly said she would “hustle the ‘Big Brother’ guests” into thinking she’s simply an attractive Las Vegas cocktail waitress. "Actually I’m a chemist, so I think I’m going to surprise everyone in the ‘Big Brother’ house with how smart I am,” she said.

Those who know Reilly agree. “On the show, Rachel definitely plays up her defined character as VIP cocktail waitress to the fullest,” Saindon said. “I think she is a very smart girl but is playing up a party girl image right now. I think people are underestimating her.”

Burleson, who considers herself one of Reilly’s biggest fans, loves watching her friend on television. “She seems to be the same person in a lot of ways,” Burleson said, "But the thing that stands out is that I know she is a strong woman and that she can hold her own.”

Editor’s note: Reilly’s housemates voted unanimously for her eviction in Episode 16.
SWEAT EQUITY
An alumnus makes his national television debut while marketing deodorant
BY SKY KANOTT

Through his job as brand manager with the Dial Corp., Erick Dickens ’96 was put in charge of successfully launching the new line of Right Guard Total Defense 5 deodorant. And what better way to make a big splash than enlisting the help of contestants on NBC’s reality show “The Celebrity Apprentice” as they sweat it out under the watchful eye of none other than Donald Trump?

In launching the campaign, Dickens made his national TV debut on “The Celebrity Apprentice” as a judge in helping determine the final commercial that will be used to spread the Right Guard message around the world. “The filming lasts up to 12 hours each day and the production may use only five minutes of footage from the day. It is important to maintain your poise and energy throughout the entire filming,” said Dickens. “Also, after a while, you completely forget you are being filmed. It was at times a challenge to remember that everything I said and did throughout the course of the day was being recorded.”

The national media campaign for the new line of deodorant will include television commercials, digital videos, point-of-purchase marketing, sweepstakes and of course, “The Celebrity Apprentice” appearance seen by millions of Americans on April 11.

On the show, the celebrity contestants, divided into a male team and female team, were assigned a former NBA player, Scottie Pippen or Clyde Drexler, to produce the Right Guard commercial. The celebrities featured were Bill Goldberg, Curtis Stone, Bret Michaels, Carol Liefer, Sharon Osbourne, Summer Sanders, Selita Ebanks, Darryl Strawberry, Holly Robinson Peete, Maria Kanellis, Michael Johnson, Rod Blagojevich, Cyndi Lauper and Sinbad.

The winning commercial featured Drexler in a humorous 30-second shot made by the male celebrity team. “The men’s team delivered a creative concept that is consistent with the Right Guard brand strategy and, more specifically, the launch of Right Guard Total Defense 5,” said Dickens.

Dickens is no stranger to “the Donald.” Before his recent turn in front of the cameras, he worked behind the scenes with Mark Burnett Productions on “The Apprentice” in 2006 on another ad campaign launch. Future plans to work with Mark Burnett Productions are uncertain, but the company has proven to be an invaluable partner. “I have no doubt that we will work together again in the future,” said Dickens.

Dickens’ experiences have influenced other students at WCU to follow in his footsteps, including his younger brother, Brian Dickens ’08, a computer information systems major. “My brother is the reason why I chose to attend WCU,” said Brian Dickens. “I’ve always admired his accomplishments, and I am very proud of him.”

Erick Dickens wants students to know there are opportunities to become successful at the national level after leaving Western Carolina. “It is important to do well at Western Carolina,” he said. “The success habits you develop there will continue to help you succeed long after graduation.”

Sky Kanott is an intern in WCU’s Office of Public Relations.

Erick Dickens ’96, holding a basketball, was a judge on the NBC reality show “Celebrity Apprentice,” featuring Donald Trump, at center. Also pictured are, from left, George Ross and Ivanka Trump, regulars on the show, and Dickens’ colleague Dan Fietsom.
1964
David Evans Jr. MAEd ’71 received the S.C. Association of School Psychologists award for outstanding contributions to the field of school psychology. Evans was instrumental in recent passage of a state law that established a new license and allows specialist-level school psychologists to do private practice. He retired as a school psychologist after more than 38 years in education. He and his wife, Anne Walker, live in Sumter, S.C.

1965
Sue Sams retired after 44 years of teaching. She ended her career at Ardrey Kell High School in Charlotte, where she led the math department for four years and taught advanced placement calculus. “There’s so much structure and beauty to math,” Sams said. “There’s so much about math that the world revolves around.”

1969

Candie Gibson Lemaire has written a memoir and coffee-table book titled “Furnitureland: Glimpses of Sentiment” about her hometown of High Point. The book examines how High Point’s rich textile and commerce industry was an early American pioneer of “good business” and how the city continues to draw new ventures and entrepreneurs. Lemaire, a former teacher, is a freelance writer who also composes poetry and songs.

NIGGLI REUNION
The late Josefina Niggli was the uniting force behind a reunion in July. Former students, friends and fans of Niggli, a talented writer and beloved teacher of drama and journalism, gathered to mingle, attend a screening of the film “Sombrero” (based on a work of fiction by Niggli, who also co-wrote the screenplay) and enjoy a student-created performance about “Miss Niggli.” At top, Luther Jones ’74 MAEd ’82 (second from right), technical director for the School of Stage and Screen, showed off the Fine and Performing Arts Center as part of a tour of campus entertainment venues. At Jones’ right, facing the camera, are Jessica Phelps-West ’77 and Jonathan Ray ’77. At left, tour participants view an oil painting of Niggli by WCU student Michael Dodson Jr., who won a campuswide competition with the work.
1970

Bob Thomas and his wife, Pam, gave a $1,000 gift to WCU’s College of Arts and Sciences that initiated a program to support student participation in engaging learning activities that extend beyond the classroom. Thomas is president and chief executive officer of EIS, a leading distributor of electrical apparatus, equipment, wiring supplies and related equipment based in Atlanta. The gift is being matched with $1,000 in contributions received from other alumni of the college, for a total of $2,000 to provide four awards of $500 each to undergraduate or graduate students in the College of Arts and Sciences.

1971

Former Catamount football player Joe Miller, nicknamed “the Machine” during his Cullowhee years, was inducted into the Greater Wilmington Sports Hall of Fame in May. Miller has more than 30 years of experience in high school athletics, including 20 years in the New Hanover County schools, where he worked as a coach and administrator. A native of Wilmington, Miller retired in August.

1972

Philip B. Bowser MA retired and moved to Portland, Ore., after 36 years as a school psychologist. He recently accepted a position with Lewis and Clark College teaching school psychologist candidates. He awaits his sixth grandchild, expected in August.

1975

Gary Ends owns Lexington Tire Pros in Lexington. Ends bought the business six years ago after a 30-year career in the furniture industry.

1976

Sandy Segal Lish (below, standing) was named an American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences 2010 National Teacher of the Year merit finalist. The award recognizes exemplary family and consumer sciences teachers in elementary and secondary education. Lish is a teacher at Billerica Memorial High School in Billerica, Mass. In 1996, she re-established the Billerica High childcare program, which has since served approximately 1,000 students who gain knowledge, skills and hands-on experience in childcare.

1977

Gregory Aaron Hyatt MIT ’80 recently received his doctoral degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Tokyo. Hyatt is an executive with DMG/Mori Seiki USA and lives in Barrington, Ill., with his wife, Joan, and their four children. Hyatt’s father, Aaron Hyatt, is retired as the dean of WCU’s Graduate School. His mother, Jane Rogers Hyatt ’64, is a former assistant professor of housing and interior design.

Carol Schafer is a member of the Penn State Commission for Women at the invitation of Penn State President Graham B. Spanier. The commission addresses the professional welfare of all members of the university community; its members include Penn State administrators, faculty, staff and technical service employees, and undergraduate and graduate students. Schafer joined Penn State in 1998 and is a professor of theater, integrative arts and women’s studies at Penn State Beaver. In 2009, she received the Achieving Women Award from the commission.

Terry Snyder and his wife, Miriam “Dawn” Eldridge, have developed www.ncinfoplus.com, a website that offers thousands of links to other sites with North Carolina-related information in categories such as government, education, chambers of commerce, municipalities and travel. The couple also owns and operates Kicks and Grins in Charlotte, a store that offers North Carolina-related products. “The website is a byproduct of the store in that my customers have been asking me for years to share my North Carolina experiences and knowledge with others,” Snyder said.

1980

William C. Hiatt MBA is a member of the board of the Henderson County Education Foundation. Hiatt, an environmental engineer, lives in Hendersonville with his wife, Laverne, and their two daughters.

1984

Don Capaforte has joined Angel Medical Center in Franklin as the executive director for the foundation. Capaforte previously worked with the Georgia Baptist Children’s Home as the regional ministries coordinator.

1991

Jacqueline Byerly MAEd is principal of North Windy Ridge in Buncombe County. North Windy Ridge merges the last year of elementary school with the first year of middle school and serves approximately 600 fifth- and sixth-grade students. Byerly previously was principal of Candler Elementary School and has been with Buncombe County Schools in a variety of positions since 1978.

1992

Nolan Davis is associate vice president for student affairs at Indiana State University. In this role, Davis works to improve coordination of campuswide efforts and is in charge of budget tracking and assessment for student affairs. He previously was director of student activities and organizations.

Class Notes wants the scoop on your life events. Retirements, anniversaries, career changes, babies, great vacations – let us know. E-mail your news and photos to jingram@wcu.edu or mail them to Jill Ingram MA ’08, Class Notes editor, 427 H.F. Robinson, Cullowhee N.C. 28723. For more information, call 828.227.2988.
1993

Theresa Graham Emma and her husband, Christopher Emma, welcomed their second child, James Anthony Carlos, on May 28. The couple lives in Morris County, N.J., and has an older daughter, Sofia Elizabeth.

1994

Wendy Edney MAEd serves as vice president of the Henderson County Education Foundation. Edney, regional coordinator for career and technical education for the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, also is pursuing her doctorate in education at WCU. She and her husband, Frank Edney MSA ’01, live in Hendersonville with their two sons.

MANDOLIN REIGN
A mountain musician plucks his way across the globe

By SUZANNE RAETHER

A picture is worth a thousand words, and Dennis White ’76 knows this better than most. “A photograph changed the course of my life,” White said. An experienced musician, White was teaching private lessons in Montana when the life-altering photo came his way. “One of my students brought in a photo of the Bozeman Mandolin and Guitar Club of 1902-06,” White said. The picture sparked the idea to rekindle the club. The group started as a few friends and musicians playing for fun Thursday evenings in White’s living room but soon blossomed into something much bigger: the Montana Mandolin Society. “I never thought I’d be creating this kind of music,” White said. “The vast range has been incredible.”

Founded by White in 1999, the Montana Mandolin Society is one of only two nationally touring mandolin ensembles in the United States. Frequenting international festivals and mandolin conferences, the society has gained a good deal of popularity. “Music has no borders,” White said. “We all speak the same language when it comes to music.” The society’s roots are in Montana community performances, schools and workshops; however, its members welcome all audiences. Playing everywhere possible, from Washington to Tokyo, the Montana Mandolin Society aims to educate listeners about the beauty and versatility of the mandolin.

In addition to its educational role, the MMS is a renowned performance ensemble. In 2001, Montana state senators selected the MMS to represent their state in a performance at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The Montana Mandolin Society was featured on NPR’s “All Things Considered,” has performed on Capitol Hill and in third-grade classrooms, and treats each performance as a chance to connect audiences with the rich history and sound of the American mandolin.

“I never would have traveled, met or played with as many great players had I not started the MMS,” White said.

Suzanne Raether is a professional writing graduate student from New Orleans.

1997

Elizabeth Ann Gavigan Stapleton recently earned a master’s degree in social work from Winthrop University.

2002

Kim Marie McGinnis MAEd is the first female president of Williamsburg Technical College in Kingstree, S.C.

Jennifer Beasley Mehaffey was the 2008-09 Teacher of the Year for Haywood County Schools.

2004

Stephen Chandler EdS is principal at Candler Elementary School in Buncombe County. He previously was principal of Barnardsville Elementary and has been with Buncombe County Schools since 1990.

2005

Tara Mull Ryan is beginning her fifth year as a Carolina Panthers TopCats cheerleader. Ryan, a line captain and former member of the WCU dance team, said she enjoys the opportunity to volunteer throughout the community as a TopCat. She lives in Charlotte and is employed with Duke Energy.

2006

Heidi Beth Allison MSA is principal of Barnardsville Elementary School in Buncombe County. She previously served as assistant principal at Haw Creek and Hominy Valley elementary schools and has been a teacher and administrator with Buncombe County Schools since 2001.

Charleton Tremayne Grant recently earned a master’s degree in business administration with an emphasis in accounting from Winthrop University.

Gary Takacs and his wife, Colby, are parents to Lucas Mason, born June 27. Takacs is a senior recreation specialist for Parks and Recreation of Lynchburg, Va., in charge of planning youth and adult activities.

Keith Tyburski (right) was named head coach of men’s golf at Colgate University after serving as interim head coach last fall. During his collegiate career, Tyburski won the 2004 Western Carolina Intercollegiate Invitational, was named to the Southern Conference All-Academic team four times and was the 2005-06 Student-Athlete Athletic Counsel team representative. Tyburski, who ranks 26th all-time on WCU’s career scoring average chart, played professionally on various minicircuits across the country.

2009

Laurie Calvert MA, who studied English composition and rhetoric, has taken a position with the communications office of the U.S. Department of Education. As a Washington fellow in the Teaching Ambassador Fellowship program, Calvert is based in the department’s headquarters, where her duties include contributing to speeches for U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Calvert’s early career was in
advertising before she turned to teaching, which she describes as “the profession that I now realize I was called for all along.” Her professional focus includes teaching students to write critically; raising expectations for students; reaching reluctant readers and rural students from lower socioeconomic statuses; recruiting and compensating effective teachers; and engaging parents and the community in education.

Aaron Camp is an intern with Equality NC, a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to securing equal rights and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Randall C. Hall MBA is interim president and CEO of Weststar Financial Services Corp. and Bank of Asheville. Hall has been with the bank since its founding in 1997 and has served as executive vice president, chief financial officer and secretary/treasurer. Hall was with Bank of Granite prior to joining Bank of Asheville and is active with the United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County and the Western North Carolina AIDS Project.

Kasey Hudson Moore (below) recently completed her first year as an exceptional children’s teacher at Chapel Grove Elementary School in Gastonia and was selected by her peers as best new teacher for the 2009-2010 school year. “I feel WCU has prepared me well for the classroom,” Moore said. “I am continuing to learn more and more about how to teach effectively.” She married Kevin Moore ’07 in July 2009.

Micah M. Ortwein recently graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Recruit Training Center in Cape May, N.J.

Jesse Romine is director of video production for Stellar Media, a division of Mountaineer Publishing Co. based in Waynesville.

2010

Dawn Kurry is a reporter with the Richmond County Daily Journal in Rockingham.

Nicole McRight (left), a graduate of the communication sciences and disorders program, received an award from the North Carolina Speech, Hearing and Language Association based on academic excellence and merit. “Nicole was consistently present, prepared and willing to participate and help in any way,” said Bill Ogletree, head of WCU’s Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. A resident of Sylva, McRight is the speech-language pathologist at Blue Ridge School in Cashiers.

As an employee of Aramark-Western Carolina University, Brian Arrington ’90 not only takes the cake, but he also bakes it. Head pastry chef for Aramark’s catering division, Arrington recently received the Employee of the Year Award from the university’s campus dining services partner. A native of Waynesville, he returned to the campus kitchens in 2008 after working in a similar capacity for the Waynesville Country Club.

Arrington, who had previously been with Aramark at WCU from 1998 to 2000, said that his favorite part of the food service business is baking, and that his specialty is cheesecake. “I got into the pastry side of food service in the early 1990s at the country club in Waynesville,” he said. “It soon became my forte and it is still the part of culinary that I like best.”

He’s been winning more than top honors from his company. He’s also winning rave reviews from his campus customers. “Since Brian has been with Aramark, planning what scrumptious treat to serve to board of trustees members, Board of Governors members, honorary doctorate recipients and other special guests has been easy,” said Terry Welch, assistant to the chancellor. “While we go over every detail of the rest of the dinner menu, dessert is never a problem. We simply ask for ‘anything by Brian!’ We know it will be wonderful.”

Arrington, who earned his degree in business management, lives at Lake Junaluska.
STRENGTH IN NUMBERS
Coterie of doctoral students wrap up their work

Four graduates of WCU’s master of education program in community college administration liked it so much the first time they came back for more. Fairley Pollock MAEd ’05 EdD ’09 (far right), Tanya Davis MAEd ’04 EdD ’09 (not pictured), Bonnie Winecoff MAEd ’04 EdD ’09 (far left) and Jana Ulrich MAEd ’04 EdD ’09 (center) earned their doctorates in educational leadership, with a concentration in community college/higher education leadership.

Davis, Winecoff and Ulrich, all of Stanly County, spent four years routinely driving three and four hours to Asheville and Cullowhee for weekend classes and single-day meetings. “We started together and finished together,” said Ulrich, adding that the group effort motivated the women. “It really shows the strength of cohort learning.”

What really distinguishes these graduates is the quality of their research, said Meagan Karvonen, director of WCU’s doctoral program in educational leadership. “All four chose topics that are particularly timely and have the potential to affect practice,” Karvonen said.

Pollock, coordinator of student services at the Macon Campus of Southwestern Community College, researched the integration of early college students (high school students based on community college campuses) with traditional community college students. She found that the quality of academic and social integration of the older students decreases respectively in correlation with higher percentages of early college students in their classes and on campus overall. Her research prompted changes at Macon Early College, including a required, yearlong orientation course for early college students.

Davis, vice president of continuing education at Stanly Community College and head of its Crutchfield Campus, researched the institutionalization of employability skills at Guilford Technical Community College. Winecoff, a community health educator at Stanly Regional Medical Center, investigated current and planned practices in community colleges statewide relative to services to promote Latino student success. Ulrich, director of learning technologies at Stanly Community College, examined the impact of faculty attitudes, knowledge and contextual constraints on the adoption of Web 2.0 tools in online environments.
WCU's School of Nursing counts more than 2,000 alumni, and Mary Kneedler inevitably encountered them as she grew older and her health required doctor's visits and hospital stays. She didn't know them, but they knew her. "The nurses would find out who she was, and boy, were they on it. They knew she was the one," said niece Mary Emily Antley.

Kneedler, of Asheville, died June 11 at 97 years old. She not only served as the first head of WCU's nursing department, she was instrumental in its founding. Arriving in Cullowhee in 1962, after her husband, Jay Kneedler, accepted a position on the business faculty, Mary Kneedler worked as a part-time instructor and soon turned her attention to establishing a bachelor's degree of nursing program at WCU. After much work, the N.C. Board of Nursing granted permission for a WCU program in 1969, the same year the N.C. General Assembly appropriated money for its support.

Born May 4, 1913, in Wilmington, Mary Kneedler earned a nursing degree from Duke University in 1936, setting her on a career path to which she remained committed. She went to work as a public health nurse, driving her black Plymouth through rural Caldwell, Wake and Alamance counties to serve her patients. "When she could not reach her patients by car, Mary would walk," according to the nomination for an honorary degree WCU awarded her in 2001. "Many a time she took off her shoes, held her nursing bag over her head and forded a stream or creek to reach her patients." "Her heart was always with serving, especially poor people, women and children," Antley said.

Kneedler arrived at WCU highly accomplished, having earned a bachelor's degree in public health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1947 and a master's degree in public health nursing administration from the Teachers College of Columbia University in 1952. She directed the public health nursing section of the State Board of Health from 1954 to 1962, and in 1965 was part of a presidential panel that examined the needs of preschoolers, resulting in the formation of the Head Start early childhood program. Closer to home, Kneedler pledged the lead gift for the WCU campus childcare facility named in her honor, remarking at the center's opening in 2002 that she'd had a life filled with "opportunities galore."

At Kneedler’s memorial, family friend and WCU senior director of development Jim Manring ’74 MBA ’76 recalled Kneedler's words from a decade earlier, when she was confined to a wheelchair. “Since I can no longer do, I will be,” she’d said. “I will be thoughtful and kind and generous and loving and caring.” To those who knew her, she always was.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST

Mary Kneedler’s passion left WCU for the better

By JILL INGRAM MA ’08

WCU's School of Nursing counts more than 2,000 alumni, and Mary Kneedler inevitably encountered them as she grew older and her health required doctor's visits and hospital stays. She didn't know them, but they knew her. "The nurses would find out who she was, and boy, were they on it. They knew she was the one," said niece Mary Emily Antley.

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SEPTEMBER
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21
Carolina Chocolate Drops (left) – African-American country/folk music. Part of the Arts and Cultural Events performance series. 7:30 p.m. Fine and Performing Arts Center. 828.227.2479

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24
The Hunt Family – Irish dance and Celtic, bluegrass, inspirational and popular tunes. Part of the Galaxy of Stars Series. 7:30 p.m. Fine and Performing Arts Center. 828.227.2479

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25
Catamount football – vs. Chattanooga. 6 p.m. E.J. Whitmire Stadium. 800.34.GOWCU

OCTOBER
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3
The Massenkoff Russian Folk Festival – Traditional song, dance and music of Russia. Part of the Galaxy of Stars Series. 3 p.m. Fine and Performing Arts Center. 828.227.2479

WEDNESDAY-SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6-9
“Romantic Fools” – A comedy about male-female relationships; for mature audiences. Part of the Niggli Series. 7:30 p.m. Niggli Theatre. 828.227.2479

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9
Catamount football – vs. Samford. Homecoming. 3 p.m. E.J. Whitmire Stadium. 800.34.GOWCU

MOUNTAIN MIDWAY
Demonstrations of mountain folk arts and skills (left and below) will be in abundance at WCU’s 36th Mountain Heritage Day, an annual celebration of Southern Appalachian culture from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 25, on the WCU intramural fields and at the Mountain Heritage Center, rain or shine. The festival features two stages of traditional music and dance, 75 booths of high-quality arts and crafts, exhibitions of shape-note singing and Cherokee stickball, and a new Children’s Tent. For more information, call 828.227.7129 or go online to MountainHeritageDay.com.
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22
"'S Wonderful" – The new Gershwin musical. 7:30 p.m.
Fine and Performing Arts Center. 828.227.2479

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23
Catamount football – vs. Appalachian State. Battle for the Old
Mountain Jug. 3 p.m. E.J. Whitmire Stadium. 800.34.GOWCU

NOVEMBER

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3
Chanticleer – Chorus of 12 male voices ranging from countertenor
to bass. Part of the Arts and Cultural Events performance series. 7:30 p.m. Fine and Performing Arts Center. 828.227.2479

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4
Lance Brown’s "Will Rogers Now!" – A portrait of the gentle
American hero in words, theater and song. Part of the Galaxy
of Stars Series. 7:30 p.m. Fine and Performing Arts Center. 828.227.2479

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13
Catamount football – vs. Georgia Southern. Hall of Fame Weekend. 3 p.m. E.J. Whitmire Stadium. 800.34.GOWCU

WEDNESDAY, SATURDAY
AND SUNDAY,
NOVEMBER 17, 20 AND 21
"Rent" – A gritty look into the
lives of seven friends in New
York’s East Village at the end
of the 20th century. Part of the
Mainstage Theatre Season. 7:30 p.m. Wednesday and Saturday; 3 p.m. Sunday.
Fine and Performing Arts Center. 828.227.2479

DECEMBER

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5
"Sounds of the Season" – Annual holiday concert. 3 p.m.
Fine and Performing Arts Center. 828.227.2479

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9
"A Christmas Carol" – Live radio program re-creating a 1938
Campbell’s Playhouse version of the holiday classic. 7:30 p.m.
Fine and Performing Arts Center. 828.227.2479

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10
"Hank and My Honky-Tonk Heroes" – Singer, actor and musician
Jason Petty pays homage to Hank Williams and other legends
of country music. Part of the Galaxy of Stars Series. 7:30 p.m.
Fine and Performing Arts Center. 828.227.2479

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Students have a new gathering place in the center of campus at a quad coming to life around the newly opened Blue Ridge Hall and adjacent Balsam Hall. When completed, the quad will include additional landscaping, walkways and a fountain.