

**Campus Buzz**



**JUSTIN  
 McLACHLAN**

**Graduates need help with their student loan debt**

**ON FRIDAY**, the WVU Alumni Association broke ground on a new 48,000-square-foot alumni center. The school says the building, which will be four times the size of the old one, should be ready by late fall 2008. One thing this project has going for it: Private donors are covering the \$12 million price tag.

Still, when it comes to fundraising priorities, I can't help but remember that the average WVU undergrad leaves school with a minimum \$13,000 in debt, according to state education officials.

Looking at the number of seniors that graduated last year, it would only take about \$5 million to wipe out their student loan debt. Even investing a fraction of that amount, say \$2 million, back into the school's financial aid pool could help to alleviate a sometimes-crushing burden on our graduates.

Let's face it: If we want WVU grads to stay and work in the state, and I think we do, putting the money that the WVU Foundation raised for the alumni center into a tuition reimbursement program for grads who stay in West Virginia might be a better use than constructing a big, pretty building on Evansdale.

And, here's another priority-reality check. About a year or so ago, the state's PROMISE program budget was in flux. There just wasn't enough money to keep giving all the state's qualifying students the scholarships the legislature intended when the program was created, so they responded by changing the requirements so less students qualified. How much money did PROMISE need to keep going as it had been? At the time, about \$8 to \$10 million.

Obviously, it is all about the money, and as state funding for higher education continues to drop, our priorities for how we handle money need to be in check with what's really important: educating students (the state's future workforce). On the other hand, maybe someone somewhere was thinking of the return on investment when the new alumni center was approved. Building a big, pretty building that caters to the sensibilities of the school's richer alumni might help bolster the school's overall fundraising efforts. I'm not banking on the idea, but maybe WVU is.

**First-year update**

Last week, I wrote about WVU's First Year Experience self-study, a program the school is using to try to better its programs for first-year students. Based on the information I had at the time, which was from the company that developed the self-study, I said that WVU spent about \$30,000 for the program. I've since been able to get in touch with Robin Jones, a dean of students at WVU and first-year experience director. She said WVU paid about \$20,000 for the program.

She said she believes that price is "incredibly cheap if you consider what we save if we retain even two or three out-of-state students for four to six years."

**JUSTIN MCLACHLAN** is a graduate journalism student at WVU. He can be reached at [campuslife@dominionpost.com](mailto:campuslife@dominionpost.com).

**"I just wanted to make a change physically, emotionally and spiritually. I wanted to feel better inside. Within my changes, I found that the best health care for me was to care for myself."**  
 — Sherrie Garner

**148 pounds lighter**

*Graduate student Sherrie Garner has a new outlook on life*

**FOR MORE** information about WVU's Wellness and Nutrition Initiative, visit [wellness.wvu.edu](http://wellness.wvu.edu).  
**FOR MORE** information about diet and exercise programs, contact Health Management Resources at 293-6883 or Colleen Harshbarger at the Student Recreation Center, 293-5054.

Submitted to The Dominion Post

About eight months ago, WVU graduate student Sherrie Garner made a life-changing decision — she took on a personal challenge to live a healthier life through exercise and weight management.

But reaching those personal goals wasn't easy. She juggled her healthy diet and exercise program while working full-time as a mental health specialist at WVU Hospitals and pursuing graduate studies.

But Garner's hard work paid off in a 148-pound weight loss since beginning the healthier lifestyle changes in October 2006.

"The focus I maintained to reach my personal goals was achieved through the support of my mom, many friends and my choice of health care and recreational professionals," said Garner, 37, who is studying to be a school counselor in the College of Human Resources and Education.

"I just wanted to make a change physically, emotionally and spiritually," she added. "I wanted to feel better inside. Within my changes, I found that the best health care for me was to care for myself."

When Garner made her life-changing decision, she was 36 and weighed 350 pounds. She consulted a team of medical professionals from Health Management Resources and WVU Hospitals, along with a therapist. HMR is a national weight-management organization based in Boston, which operates in Morgantown under the umbrella of University Health Associates. Through consultation with her support team, she pursued her personal health goals.

The team of professionals at HMR worked with Garner to set up a weight and lifestyle change program. She had a choice as to how quickly she wanted to lose weight in the program — she chose what she terms the most "aggressive" route, which included exercise and a very low calorie diet. Her initial goal was to lose 50 pounds. When she lost that, and then 100 pounds, she decided to keep going. Her overall goal today is to lose 150 pounds, which she has nearly reached.

Garner began her exercise pro-



Submitted photo

**WVU Hospitals employee** and graduate student Sherrie Garner exercises on the stair stepper at WVU's Student Recreation Center. Garner lost 148 pounds over a period of eight months through healthy diet and exercise.

gram by walking on the indoor track at WVU's Student Recreation Center. As she built stamina, she also began exercising on other equipment at the center, including stairsteppers and elliptical trainers.

Today, she lifts weights and also exercises on the leg press.

"Sherrie is an inspiration to us all," said Colleen Harshbarger, the Rec Center's manager of fitness, wellness and informal recreation.

"She is providing a lot of encouragement to show others what can be accomplished with a healthy diet and exercise, and she also shows the Rec Center is for everybody."

One of the best parts of exercising

at the Rec is everyone's support, Garner said. It was through the Center that Garner connected with Emily Murphy, a pediatric exercise physiologist with WVU's School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, who has worked with Linda Carson, Ware Distinguished Professor in the WVU School of Physical Education, to fight childhood obesity. When Garner was an undergraduate student at WVU studying physical education, Carson was her advisor.

"Emily was the first person that made mention to what I refer to as my life transformation at the Rec Center," Garner said. "She was very encouraging. Everyone at the student rec has been very helpful and supportive."

Garner tells everyone that her aim for a healthier self has been tremendously fun. She recently celebrated with family and friends at a three-hour exercise party called "I've Totally Lost It!"

"Celebrating with an exercise party shared with friends and family was taking my new-found energy into a lifestyle of maintaining optimum health," Garner said, noting the decision to lose weight was a proactive approach to her life.

"At this point, my choice to share my journey is because I desire to be an educator and an inspiration to others. The method of helping others as a counselor is one of being a role model."

Garner sees her role now as an educator who can inform and show others that weight loss goals are attainable. She has written several testimonials about her experience.

"Today, I feel amazing," Garner said. "My greatest compliment is when others say how healthy I look and sound. I believe achieving my own peace is in how I see myself. Today, I like how I see and feel about me. With my weight loss I have gained so much self-confidence. I value the size I am and no longer feel it is out of my control to maintain a healthy weight for myself."

WVU offers many programs for students, faculty and staff, which include exercise, nutrition and mental health. The Rec Center offers free personal training and group classes to its members. Plans are also under way to offer a new group exercise class for people who have a significant amount of weight to lose. The programs and services are part of WVU President David C. Hardesty Jr.'s Wellness and Nutrition Initiative. The initiative was set forth to get students, faculty, staff and the WVU community more physically active and aware of campus wellness options.

**WVU Student Spotlight**

**Butch Hoppe (aka Boots)**

**MAJOR:** Environmental protection

**AGE:** 18

**HOMETOWN:** Belington

**DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN ONE WORD:**

Crazy

**THE ONE THING YOU WANT MORE THAN**

**ANYTHING:** To be able to fly like Superman

**DOGS OR CATS:** No, but a fish named Leroy

**BEACH OR MOUNTAINS:** Beach

**Favorites**

**BAND:** George Jones/Nirvana

**FOOD:** Biscuits and sausage gravy

**SPORT:** Football

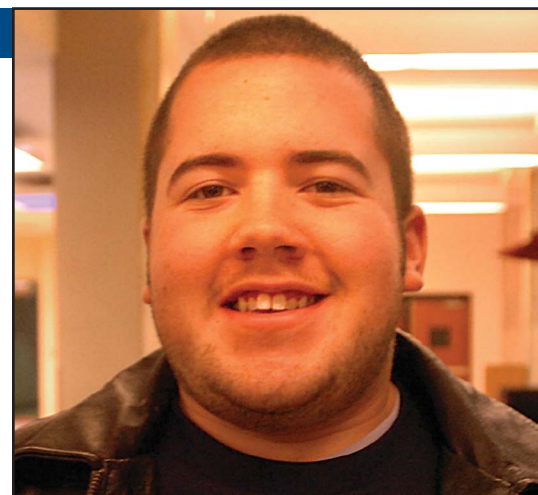
**CLASS:** That's not my favorite thing

**TV SHOW:** "Family Guy"

**MOVIE:** "Pulp Fiction"

**BOOK:** "The Long Walk" by Stephen King

**IF YOU** would like to be profiled in the WVU Student Spotlight, e-mail your name and phone number to [campuslife@dominionpost.com](mailto:campuslife@dominionpost.com) or call 291-9426.



Todd Flint/The Dominion Post

**By the Numbers**

**25**

Number of WVU College of Law students that participated in the international study in Brazil program.

**West Virginia University**

WVU's College of Business and Economics: Business programs accredited under the stringent guidelines of AACSB International; U.S. News & World Report's 2006 edition ranked the college among the top quartile of AACSB-accredited undergraduate programs in the country. Of the 504 programs eligible, B&E was ranked 116th. Among public institutions, the WVU College of Business & Economics was ranked 89th. Visit us at: [www.be.wvu.edu](http://www.be.wvu.edu).

**West Virginia University**