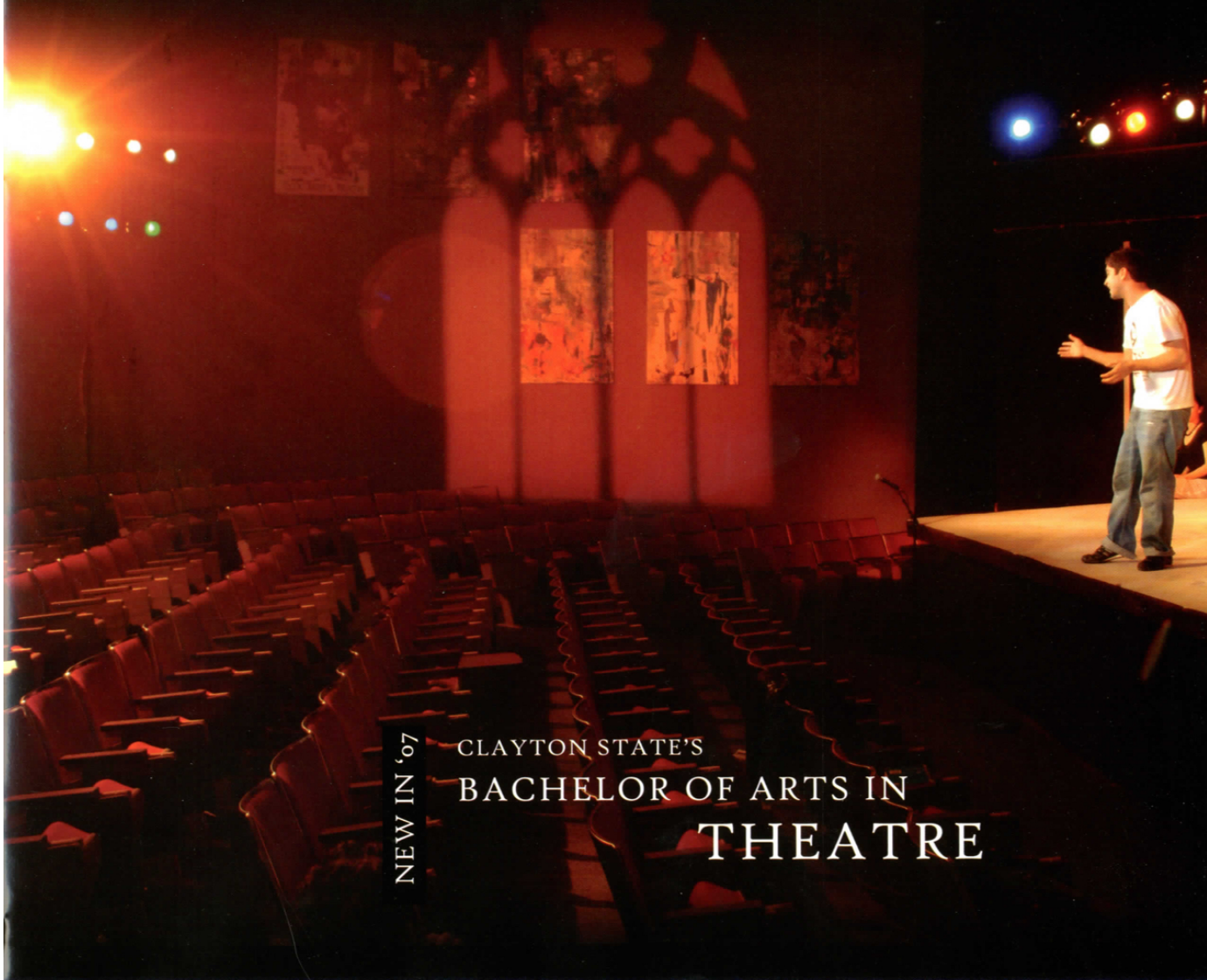


SPRING 2007  
VOLUME II, NO. I

# THE LAKER CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF CLAYTON STATE UNIVERSITY



NEW IN '07

CLAYTON STATE'S  
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN  
THEATRE



FULBRIGHT GRANTS

THE "A TEAM"

THE BENT TREE

THE SMITH AWARDS



### President's Message

In the past year, Clayton State University has grown and developed in several exciting ways, some of which you'll have a chance to read about in this second edition of "The Laker Connection."

As a comprehensive metropolitan university, there are many ways for Clayton State to grow, though perhaps the most exciting to us as educators is the addition of new academic programs. Just since I started my tenure at Clayton State in 2000, the University has added numerous new undergraduate programs and three new graduate programs. Some are in academic disciplines that are relatively new to the University, but that are designed specifically to serve the needs of our community. Others, like our newest undergraduate major in Theatre, build on a long tradition of excellence – such as the 30-plus years of the Clayton State Theater. Created by Clayton State Theater Artistic Director Phillip DePoy, Dean of Arts & Sciences Dr. Ray Wallace and Communicative Arts & Integrative Studies Department Head Dr. Tom Barnett, the new Theatre major gives our students real-world experience to help ensure their successful transition into the profession upon graduation.

In recognition of our growth academically, Clayton State has recently undergone an academic reorganization into three Colleges (the College of Professional Studies, the College of Arts & Sciences, and the College of Information and Mathematical Sciences) and three Schools (the School of Nursing, the School of Business, and the School of Graduate Studies).

Growth can also be measured in other ways. In just over two years, Clayton State has received five Fulbright-Hays Grants, representing \$420,000, to promote faculty development and student study abroad.

A further indication of growth can be seen in quality as recognized by accrediting agencies. This past year, the Clayton State School of Business concluded six years of effort of the highest quality by obtaining what Dean Ernest Miller has called "The Gold Standard of Management Education," accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International, a major step in the development of both the University and the School of Business.

I think you'll find these stories of Clayton State's development enlightening, whether you're a graduate of Clayton State, a friend of the University, someone with a general interest in higher education in Georgia, or just a person who likes a good success story.

Thomas K. Harden, President

The Laker Connection  
Volume II, No. 1

Dr. Thomas K. Harden, President

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## Clayton State School of Business Earns AACSB Accreditation



“The Gold Standard of Management Education.”

-Dean Miller

**BUSINESS IS BOOMING:** Above: School of Business faculty. Above Collage, Left to Right: The Finance Club and its advisors; the School of Business faculty; the Accounting Club and its advisors.

**ERNEST "BUD" MILLER, DEAN OF** the Clayton State School of Business, and Associate Dean Dr. Jacob Chacko visited Paris in April of 2006, and while "April in Paris" may have various connotations to various people, for the Clayton State School of Business it meant recognition of a milestone, and the achievement of, in the words of Miller, "the Gold Standard of Management Education."

Miller and Chacko were in France to attend the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International's Conference and Annual Meeting, and to receive recognition of the University's School of Business having been awarded the Association's coveted accreditation.

According to AACSB, less than a third of all schools of business nationwide have AACSB accreditation. As an international organization, AACSB accredits less than 15 percent of schools of business worldwide. Clayton State had been working towards accreditation since the summer of 2000, when Miller first broached the idea to the then-newly-named President of the University, Dr. Thomas K. Harden, whose enthusiastic support was a key to the accreditation process.

"This great achievement would not have been possible without the efforts, contributions and support of the whole campus," says Miller. "My special thanks to the President and Provost

[Dr. Sharon Hoffman] for their support and encouragement; to Jacob Chacko for his leadership; to the faculty and staff at the School of Business for their talent, commitment, and hard work; to our students for their efforts and enthusiasm; to the other schools and colleges at Clayton State for their sacrifices in enabling our School to obtain the needed resources; and to the University's staff for their ongoing commitment to excellence.

"I think the AACSB logo describes our University's accomplishment -- Earned Excellence...The Best Business Schools In The World. This is the gold standard of management education."

"I am truly thankful for the all the hard work and commitment of our faculty, the unselfish help of other schools, and the tremendous support of the University community," adds Chacko. "Bud has led the process to transform the School of Business. Thank you for a masterful job."

The School of Business's effort was rewarded with an e-mail to Miller from AACSB's Director of Accreditation Services, Lucienne Mochel. "Congratulations to you, the faculty, students, staff and all supporters of the business programs. On behalf of the Accreditation Council, we welcome Clayton State University as a new member."

by John Shiffert

.....NOW SHOWING.....

# THE BACHELOR OF ARTS IN THEATRE



Clayton State Theater is all about students. Case in point: The fall 2006 season featured student written and student directed pieces performed by, you guessed it, student actors. The spring 2007 production promises the same but with more drama, thanks to a long-anticipated addition to Clayton State University's growing list of academic offerings...

## Raising the curtain

.....

For the student interested in working with real-world theatre experts and gaining a serious edge in the business, look no further. Clayton State University's Bachelor of Arts in Theatre officially started this semester, and we are proud to say it is the only four-year theatre program of its kind in the South.

Approved by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia in October

2006, the program partners with local playwrights, actors, directors and technicians to give students the real-world exposure they need to make connections and be successful in professional theatre.

Created by Clayton State Theater Artistic Director Phillip DePoy, Dean of Arts & Sciences Dr. Ray Wallace and Communicative Arts & Integrative Studies Department Head Dr. Tom Barnett, the degree took two and a half years to develop and is fast becoming a student favorite.

## Taking the stage

.....

Clayton State sophomore Timothy Hand is on the path to his Bachelor of Arts in Theatre. Already an active participant in Clayton State Theater, Hand believes the new major will make him more valuable to theatrical outfits because of its emphasis on involving local professionals.

"Academics are important in the theatre world," says Hand. "However, at an audition or interview, it can often come



down to the person the director knows.”

Hand plans to concentrate his coursework in technical theatre classes and has already benefited from Clayton State Theater’s focus on involving local professionals. During the fall 2006 semester, he directed two radio shows on the Clayton State stage that featured the voice talent of professional actors Hugh Adams and Jennifer Akin. He also completed an internship with the popular New American Shakespeare Tavern.

Hand appreciates these early connections and credits DePoy and Clayton State for the professional experiences he’s had thus far in his academic career. Now that he’s enrolled in the program, Hand can expect to develop further relationships with local talent and technicians before he graduates.

#### The write stuff

While acting is the most obvious profession one would enter with a theatre degree, Clayton State’s program broadens students’ horizons by incorporating everything from technical courses to classes on directing and producing. For wordsmiths like Clayton State fall 2006 graduate Dana Staves, playwriting becomes their niche.

During fall 2006, Staves saw her first-ever one act play “A Little Girl in Green Shoes” produced by Clayton State Theater and directed by DePoy. Staves’s piece, which centered on one girl’s struggle to overcome child abuse, was written last spring as part of DePoy’s playwriting course.

“Mr. DePoy has been great to work with,” shares Staves. “From the

beginning he’s been very encouraging with my writing. He sees the complexities in all the characters and takes them to a level I didn’t even realize possible.”

Staves’s play was chosen for production by a faculty panel, and classmates Wyatt Lowe (’06) and Ralph Stovall (’06) also saw their scripts produced during the fall 2006

semester. Each of the productions featured an all-student cast. Student Andrea Rowe directed Stovall’s “Three Sides to Every Story,” while Lowe directed his own work “City of Devils.”

While few playwrights see their first play produced, fewer still see their first work critiqued by professionals. As part of Clayton State

## TODD DENSON: FROM CLAYTON STATE TO HOLLYWOOD

Todd Denson, a Clayton State senior and member of the soccer team, loves performing. Acting since middle school, Denson says, “I have always had a passion for entertaining people and making people laugh.”

A Shiloh High School (Lilburn, GA) graduate, Denson came to Clayton State to further his education and gain more experience as an actor. Since his arrival, Denson has been in several Clayton State Theater productions including “Coffee Girl in the World of Good and Evil” and “Conference of the Birds.”

Clayton State Theater Artistic Director Phillip DePoy mentored and assisted Denson

in finding an agent and preparing for auditions. “Todd’s very serious about being an actor and making money,” says DePoy. Denson wanted to gain the experience any actor requires in order to succeed.

After landing film roles as Mike in “Angel’s Secret,” Calvin in 2004’s “Straight Chaser,” and Smiley in “Sparkles and Smiley Kill the Internet,” Denson wanted to become a part of something bigger.

The year 2006 would see Denson break in to Hollywood. After hearing of an audition for a film about a college football team, Denson auditioned with casting director Shay Griffith. Almost as if Hollywood knocked

on his door, Denson was able to work with accomplished actor Matthew McConaughey.

Initially Denson was an extra and only had a few lines, but he worked his way up to the role of Blake Smith, the kicker for the football team (actor Billy Bennett does the actual kicking scenes in the movie). The film, produced by Warner Bros. and Legendary Pictures, was later titled “We Are... Marshall,” and premiered on December 22, 2006.

After graduating from Clayton State, Denson plans to pursue his acting career in California. Hollywood... here he comes!

by Sara Wheeler



“Matthew McConaughey asked me where I was from, and if I knew any good fishing places around the area. I regretfully told him that I wasn’t much into the fishing game. Not a great first moment, but a little funny.”

- Todd Denson



Theater's ongoing commitment to involving local artists, Curt Holman, National Endowment for the Arts Fellow in Theatrical Criticism and reviewer for Creative Loafing; Jessica Phelps West, artistic associate for Marietta's Theatre in the Square and noted actor and director; and Peter Hardy, artistic director for Essential Theatre Company screened Staves's play and offered criticism to the playwright and cast.

#### Standing ovation

Thanks especially to the auspices of DePoy, Clayton State's Bachelor of Arts in Theatre is set to deliver unique, quality theatre instruction. But one could almost expect Clayton State's program to be unique with a theatrical renaissance man as director.

DePoy is a nationally recognized director, novelist, playwright and Edgar Award recipient. His Dell mystery novels, featuring Atlanta character Flap Tucker, have been called the best regional detective fiction on the market today.

His novel, "The Witch's Grave" was praised by Publisher's Weekly as "a delightful fireside feast," while his newest novel "A Minister's Ghost" was released in December 2006 to rave reviews. And if you can't get enough of DePoy's Fever Devillin series, you're in luck. The author has a new two-book contract from St. Martin's Press.

In 2005, Marietta's Theatre in the Square commissioned DePoy to write "Turned Funny," a play based on Celestine Sibley's autobiography by the same name. Premiering during the 2006 season, "Turned Funny" sold

**THE WORLD'S A STAGE:** Above Collage, Left to Right: Poster for the 2006 radio shows; (upper) "The Conference of the Birds;" (lower left to right) Lighting in the Clayton State Theater; Artistic Director Phillip DePoy; A fight scene from the production "Hamlet the Musical!;" A panel from the One Act Play's program; the One Act Plays poster.

out, making it one of the best selling productions in the theatre's 25-year history.

DePoy's professional career makes him a perfect medium between the theatre and the student worlds. DePoy is dedicated to giving theatre majors the opportunity to explore not only the academic side of theatre, but also the experiential side. From writing to production, DePoy intends to fully immerse theatre majors in the creative process.

"There is no test drive in the theatre world," explains DePoy. "This major really gives students the opportunity to understand what real theatre is like and allows them to work in professional theatre before they graduate."

#### Lights!

As the stage lights raise on the new theatre major, theatre goes and students alike can rest assured that Clayton State Theater will remain devoted to educating student actors, directors, technicians and playwrights.

But theatre majors can aspire to more than a moment in the Clayton State Theater spotlight. With solid local connections, students can expect to work with top directors and professional actors, gain a strong academic footing in the discipline, intern at nationally recognized theatres and learn in one of the most effective ways, by experience.

by Lauren Graves

## PROGRAM GROWTH

Since 2000, 10 undergraduate programs and three graduate programs have been added to the Clayton State catalog, including undergraduate programs in History, Music Education, English, Criminal Justice, Health and Fitness Management, Mathematics, Political Science, WebBSIT, the re-formatting of the Biology degree to a Bachelor of Science, and the newest -- the Bachelor of Arts in Theatre.

The graduate programs are perhaps the most ambitious of the programs developed in the past six years. Currently, Clayton State offers the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies, the Master of Science in Nursing and the Master in Healthcare Management. Three more graduate programs are in development; the Master in Business Administration, the Master of Archival Studies and the Master of Arts in Teacher Education.

Pending Board of Regents approval, two more undergraduate programs may be added: the Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science and a bachelor's degree in Paralegal Studies.

The process to get a program approved by the Board of Regents is fairly lengthy, so it is an impressive accomplishment to have so many programs approved in such a short time.

Dr. Sharon Hoffman, Clayton State's provost and vice president of Academic Affairs since 2002, says, "The ultimate goal in [developing] programs is getting students to [a] bachelor's degree," and that the new academic additions have been in response to the University's goal of trying to provide students with an opportunity to study at Clayton State in the field they want.

by Ashley Spillers



**Fulbright-Hays Grants: "We have the ability to do this year after year"**

**R**ajgopal Sashti, director of the Nine University and College International Studies of Georgia, came to Clayton State with 35 years of experience in international education.



“The more we as professors know about other countries and other cultures, the more we will be able to help our students adapt to a global economy. We have the ability to do this year after year.”

- Rajgopal Sashti

**TRAVELING THE GLOBE:** Above: Rajgopal Sashti. Above Collage. Left to Right: The 2005 Fulbright Group at the Royal Palace in Bangkok; a scenic shot of Chile taken by program participant and student Cindy Ethredge; Students pose during the 2004 program to Montepulciano, Italy; view of architecture and landscape in Italy; Clayton State's 2005 Chile Seminar participants.

**DESIRING TO GET CLAYTON STATE** more involved with international activities, Sashti applied for the Fulbright-Hays Grant on behalf of the University in early 2004. The \$63,000, cost-sharing award would allow faculty members, academic administrators and K-12 teachers to participate in a four week summer professional development program in Argentina and Chile.

In April 2004, Clayton State received the prestigious award to Argentina and Chile. Faculty from Clayton State and other schools were chosen by the U.S. Department of Education's Center for International Education and attended a seminar on "Historical and Contemporary Aspects of Argentina and Chile," focusing on the interrelationship between tradition and change in the context of the two countries.

Clayton State was awarded another Fulbright grant in 2005. Thanks to Sashti's efforts, 15 more local educators participated in an overseas professional program, this time to Thailand.

"There are various means for institutions of higher learning to gain recognition, but none more prestigious than a second Fulbright grant," said Dr. Thomas K. Harden, president of Clayton State.

After receiving grants totaling around \$125,000, Sashti didn't stop. In 2006, he applied for programs in Malaysia, Singapore and South Africa. And 2006 proved to be another fan-

tastic year for Clayton State, as awards were provided for three Fulbright grants totaling \$160,000 in April 2006. The grants allowed 30 more faculty of Clayton State and other Georgia institutions to travel abroad to Singapore and Malaysia in summer 2006 and South Africa in December 2006.

Harden stated of Clayton's fifth Fulbright award in only two years, "This is an unprecedented event, not only in the history of Clayton State, but also for any other University System of Georgia institution."

Under Sashti's leadership, Clayton State has been awarded approximately \$420,000 to promote faculty development and student study abroad. More than 60 faculty members have studied and traveled abroad to learn more about social, political, economic and business climates. In part because of Sashti's success, Clayton State was awarded the "International Business of the Year Award" by the Clayton County Chamber of Commerce in 2004.

With Sashti's continued dedication and leadership, 2007 should prove to be yet another award-winning year for Clayton State.

by Sara Wheeler





## Meet Clayton State's "A Team": All Americans Angela Cobb and Allison Kreutzer

Call them the "A Team." Angela Cobb and Allison Kreutzer. All-Americans. The "A" team for Clayton State's 2006 women's cross country.

**COACH MIKE MEAD HAS PRODUCED** winning teams at Clayton State since 1995. However, only in 2006 did he have an "A Team." So named by teammate Titisha Cochran, Cobb and Kreutzer led the Lakers to an outstanding season, with a 66-27 record in meet competition, a second place finish (by just two points) in the Peach Belt Conference Championships and an All-American honor.

Coming into the season, junior Kreutzer, already a two-time cross country All-American in NCAA Division II, was expected to once again be Mead's top runner. And, she was. Until Cobb, a senior transfer from Valdosta State University, came on strong at year's end, earning Peach Belt Runner of the Year honors and All-American status by finishing 20th in the National Championship meet. Fittingly for two runners who trained together throughout the season, the A Team had similar stories.

"When they each came into our program they had a dramatic change in their competitive running and training," says Mead, noting the motivation that propelled both to success.

"We also have to credit to our coaching system and the type of workouts we've had. Those who like to be challenged by speed type training will probably thrive here," Mead concludes.

"I think my experience really has strengthened my mind, which is pretty much what running is all about," says Cobb, a 23 year-old

Criminal Justice major and road runner from little Abbeville, GA, who was inspired by her mother, road runner Cara Cobb, and who didn't even compete in running until she ran a marathon at the age of 17. "I think everybody can run. As far as what separates the best from the rest, you're born with it."

"It's your mental power, your mental capability," agrees Kreutzer, an Integrative Studies major from Lilburn, GA, who also started running late – she was a soccer player until her junior year in high school. "It's how much or how motivated you are to obtaining a goal. There are some people who don't truly believe they can run fast. It's believing."

The A Team ran one-two in the first five meets, with Kreutzer just beating out Cobb all five times. However, in the Peach Belt meet, Cobb was crowned the league champion ahead of Kreutzer and then went on to qualify for the national meet by finishing fourth in the Regional Championships (Kreutzer was 10th.)

"I felt like I had a good year left in me," says Cobb, an All-Conference runner as a freshman at Valdosta who spent most of the next two years injured. Healthy again in 2006, she was mentally and physically ready for the nationals. "I was trying to act like it was another race. I think confidence makes you calmer."

by John Shiffert



Angela Cobb



Allison Kreutzer

**RUNNING THE RACE:** Above Collage. Left to Right: Angela Cobb; the Clayton State Women's Cross Country team; the A Team in action; the Clayton State Men's Cross Country team; Angela Cobb as Peachbelt Conference Champ.

# news at clayton state

*athletics, s*

## Clayton State reorganizes academic units into three colleges, three schools

**W**ITH THE START OF THE spring 2007 semester in January, Clayton State took another important step in its development – an academic reorganization into three colleges and three schools.

The colleges are the College of Professional Studies, the College of Arts & Sciences, and the College of Information and Mathematical Sciences. The three schools are the School of Nursing, the School of Business and the School of Graduate Studies.

The most significant change is the formation of the College of Professional Studies (CPS), which is comprised of the Department of Technical Studies and the Department of Aviation Maintenance from the School of Technology, and the Department of Dental Hygiene and the Department of Health Care Management from the School

of Health Sciences. Dr. Benita Moore, interim dean of the School of Technology, serves as interim dean of the College of Professional Studies.

The Clayton State School of Health Sciences became the School of Nursing, with Dr. Lisa Eichelberger, dean of Health Sciences, continuing in that role as dean of Nursing. Another major change is in Clayton State's largest academic unit, where the School of Arts & Sciences is now the College of Arts & Sciences, continuing under the direction of Dean Dr. Ray Wallace.

Also, Clayton State for the first time has a separate School of Graduate Studies, with Dr. Tom Eaves holding two titles, associate provost and dean of Graduate Studies.



Dr. Tom Eaves  
School of  
Graduate Studies



Dr. Lisa Eichelberger  
School of Nursing



Dr. Charles Ford  
College of Information and  
Mathematical Sciences



Ernest "Bud" Miller  
School of Business



Dr. Benita Moore  
College of  
Professional Studies



Dr. Ray Wallace  
College of  
Arts & Sciences

## Six great faculty... 185 years at Clayton State

Five Clayton State faculty members celebrated their 30th anniversaries at the University in the spring of 2006. At the same time, Dr. Thomas V. Barnett, professor of English and the spring 2006 Commencement speaker, marked 35 years at Clayton

State. That's a total of 185 years of educating men and women in Morrow, GA.

In addition to Barnett completing his 35th year at Clayton State, Professor of History Dr. Eugene A. Hatfield, Associate Professor of

Accounting Gregory S. Kordecki, Professor of English Dr. David A. Ludley, Professor of Reading Dr. Penney Miller, and Professor of English Dr. William A. Pasch made up the "30-Year" faculty class at Clayton State.

### Judge Boswell elected Clayton State Foundation chairman



Stephen E. Boswell

Chief Judge Stephen E. Boswell of the Clayton County Superior Court has been elected chairman to the Clayton State University Foundation's Board of Trustees for a one-year term that began on July 1, 2006.

"I've got big shoes to follow," says Boswell about his predecessor, Robert W. Lee, who held the position for two years. "My job is to help the entire board fulfill its position of support to the University."

As chairman, Boswell will be the chief executive officer of the Clayton State University Foundation. He will be responsible for presiding over all Board meetings and ensuring that all orders and resolutions passed by the Board are carried into effect.

Other members who will be serving as officers of the Board of Trustees for the 2007 term are Leonard Moreland, vice chairman; Starr Helms, secretary/treasurer; and Lata M. Chinnan, assistant secretary/treasurer. Lee will serve as past chairman.

### Clayton State Establishes a "Culture of Giving"

When Dr. Thomas K. Harden became president of Clayton State in mid-2000, one of his first goals was to establish what he referred to as a "culture of giving" among faculty, staff and students.

As he explained in a recent interview, Harden's desire was not to focus on any particular mechanism for giving, but moreso to help engender an attitude, a spirit, wherein members of the Clayton State community would feel free to both give and receive.

The recent success of the 2007 Clayton State Faculty/Staff Fund Drive has moved Harden to express that a "culture of giving" has indeed been established. And while the record-setting combination of a 99 percent participation rate and \$99,000 raised is the most noticeable manifestation of this culture, Harden also points with pride to the contributions that have been made through other giving mechanisms like the Laker Angel Club, the Clayton State Women's Forum, the state Charitable Contributions, the Circle K Club and the Honors Program Blood Drives.

All these worthy efforts indicate a successful "mission accomplished" for Clayton State.

### M. Allan Vigil named Board of Regents chair

Clayton State University Foundation Trustee M. Allan Vigil is serving a one-year term as the chair of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Vigil, who was appointed to the Board of Regents by Gov. Sonny Perdue in August 2003, will serve through



M. Allan Vigil

June 30, 2007. He has served as chair of the regents' Committee on Real Estate and Facilities for the past year.

Vigil is president and owner of Allan Vigil Ford in Morrow and Allan Vigil Ford in Fayetteville. He has been affiliated with the Ford Motor Company since 1971, when he took a job with the company as a field manager. He is a past chairman of the Georgia Automobile Dealers Association, the Metro Atlanta Automobile Dealers Association and the Ford National Dealer Council.

Among the leadership roles that Vigil has filled in support of Clayton State include making one of the first leadership gifts towards the building of Spivey Hall, helping recruit Dr. George Horton from Auburn University to serve as the University's first dean of the School of Business in 1987, and serving for the past 19 years as a sponsor of the University's annual Career Fair.

### Stay up-to-date with Clayton State

Read "Campus Review," the University's biweekly newsletter, online at <http://about.clayton.edu>.

### Roseberg and Jordan Crowned Clayton State Homecoming King and Queen

Roodgine Roseberg, representing the Student Government Association (SGA), and Larry Jordan, representing the Society for Advancement of Management (SAM), were crowned the Clayton State University 2006 Homecoming King and Queen on Oct. 14, 2006.

Roseberg and Jordan's ascension to royalty was the climax to the first half of a Homecoming Day that saw hundreds attend the Annual Alumni Association Pancake Breakfast, hundreds more participate in the annual Homecoming Parade, and still more take part in the Homecoming Carnival in front of the Baker Center.

Queen Roseberg is from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and is a dean's list student majoring in Criminal Justice. She serves as the academic affairs co-chair for SGA. She is also a PATH peer mentor and a member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and Circle K. King Jordan is from Bridgeton, N.J. and is majoring in Business Management. He is also a member of BCAA, the Insignia Mentoring Program and the NAACP. His awards and honors at Clayton State also include the dean's list, honorary member of Sigma Beta Delta and membership in the Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society.



King Larry Jordan and Queen Roodgine Roseberg

### CIMS names new award for outstanding graduate after founding dean Cathie Aust



Dr. Catherine Aust

The College of Information and Mathematical Sciences' newest student award is the Catherine Cowan Aust Award, named after founding Dean of the College, Dr. Catherine Aust, who celebrates 32 years with Clayton State University this spring.

The College faculty unanimously voted to name the award after Aust, who in turn headed the committee to create the criteria for the award. It will honor the best all-round performance in a CIMS major and will include a certificate, plaque and cash award, plus a perpetual plaque displayed in the College.

"I love to give people their flowers while they can still smell them," says Dr. Charles Ford, dean of the college. "I made the recommendation to the faculty because of Cathie's leadership and contributions to the College as the founding dean. She has been a tremendous help to me and more than deserves this honor."

### School of Nursing awarded grant for scholarships for disadvantaged students

Clayton State University's School of Nursing was awarded a \$97,794 grant by the Department of Health and Human Services Health Resource and Services Administration (HRSA) for 2006-2007 undergraduate nursing scholarships. The scholarships will specifically target students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment as full-time students at Clayton State.

The purpose of the HRSA program is to promote diversity among health professions and nursing schools to make scholarships available for those who have a financial need. Eligible schools received funding priority based on the proportion of graduating students going into primary care, the proportion of underrepresented minority students, and the proportion of graduates working in medically underserved communities.

## Society for Advancement of Management Chapter gathers awards at International Case Competition

A team from Clayton State University's Society for Advancement of Management (SAM) Chapter won the second place award in the Open Division at the case competition at the 2006 Society for Advancement of Management International Case Competition.

"This is truly outstanding, considering that graduate students participate in the Open Division and all of our students are undergraduates," said Dr. Michael Deis, Clayton State SAM advisor and associate professor of Management, of the team captained by Lisa Earls and including Schwanna Clark, Ronald Kinsey, Liz Vincent and Liz Wellington.

The Clayton State team consisting of Rebecca Barnwell, Larry Jordan, Celest Mapri, Darien Tejada and Sheena Williams also performed very admirably at the conference, adds Deis.



The Clayton State SAM Chapter

## Dixon Named Executive Director of Spivey Hall



Samuel C. Dixon

Samuel C. Dixon has been named executive & artistic director of Spivey Hall. Dixon replaces founding Executive & Artistic Director Sherryl Nelson, who retired in June 2006 after 16 years of directing the Southeast's foremost recital hall.

After 20 years of managing artists, programming and festivals for major orchestras in the United States and Australia, Dixon first joined the

staff of Clayton State University in October 2004 as general manager and assistant director of Spivey Hall. He was appointed acting executive & artistic director of the Hall in June 2006, upon Nelson's retirement. At that time, a national search was instituted to select Nelson's successor.

"I am delighted and deeply honored to assume the managerial and artistic leadership of Spivey Hall," says Dixon. "With its superb acoustics, outstanding international artist series, award-winning education programs, and generous support from The Walter & Emilie Spivey Foundation, Spivey Hall is one of America's foremost recital halls. I am dedicated to sustaining its reputation for artistic excellence. I look forward to presenting musicians of the highest quality, creating programming that serves the needs of our diverse community through fine music, and enhancing the value of Spivey Hall's offerings by increasing participation and attendance."

## Clayton State celebrates new freshman

Clayton State University and the Office of Student Affairs celebrated the freshman class of 2010 with the University's first formal New Student Convocation ceremony on Sunday, Aug. 29.

Lisa Borders, president of the Atlanta City Council, was keynote speaker, while Dr. Brian Haynes, vice president of Student Affairs, was the master of ceremonies.

This first for the University set a precedent that will continue for years to

come with an estimated 200 faculty and administrators participating dressed in formal regalia.

After Borders spoke, Dr. Thomas Barnett welcomed the new class, giving a history of the University and confirming their choice for attending Clayton State. The induction of the entering class by Dr. Mark May, dean of Retention & Student Success followed, along with a formal pinning led by Toke Adetayo, Student Government president. Dr. Sharon E. Hoffman, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, then formally accepted the entering class.



Lisa Borders and Dr. Thomas K. Harden

### Kiwanis Club of Southlake endows scholarship for disadvantaged self-starters



Lisa Sewell, Kiwanis Club of Southlake president and Mike Mead, Kiwanis Club president-elect, present a \$25,000 check to Reda Rowell, Clayton State's director of Development and Dr. Thomas K. Harden, president of Clayton State University, for the Kiwanis Club of Southlake's first endowed scholarship.

The Kiwanis Club of Southlake has presented a check to Dr. Thomas K. Harden, president of Clayton State University and Reda Rowell, director of Development, in the amount of \$25,000 to begin an endowed scholarship for the University.

The Club began working on fulfilling the scholarship nearly five years ago when they started the Freedom Run, a 5K and 10K race to benefit the endowment fund. The club had been raising and sav-

ing the money for years and decided in 2003 to endow the scholarship.

The purpose of the scholarship is to give a "leg-up" to those students who may not have the grades or the qualifications to receive traditional forms of financial aid to attend Clayton State. The HOPE Scholarship requires a 3.0 GPA, something that takes consistent time and effort to maintain in high school.

### Linking American History Program concludes at the White House

Participants in the Linking American History: Past to Present program toured Washington D.C. from June 19 to June 22, 2006, highlighted by a tour of the White House, to conclude the three-year program for Fayette, Henry and Cobb County teachers.

Linking American History: Past to Present was funded entirely by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The three-year program focused on increasing the teacher's knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the period from 1945 to present.

Dr. Eugene Hatfield, Clayton State University history professor and lead historian in the program, recently completed evaluating the program along with Clayton State history professors Dr. Randy Rosenberg and Dr. Marko Maunula.

"The program has been very successful," says Hatfield. "I believe that it will bring a fresh, new look to classrooms in Fayette, Henry and Cobb County Schools."

### Women in Leadership course a hit at Clayton State

From a management point of view, it should come as no surprise that Clayton State University's new "Women in Leadership" course was a success in its first semester. Following the most basic business principle of giving the public what they need, Dr. Margaret Thompson, assistant professor of Management in the School of Business, saw a need on behalf of Clayton State students... a need and an opportunity to meet that demand.

"I see a real need at Clayton State for this kind of course, especially given the number of female students we have enrolled," she says. "There was a real need and an opportunity to help out students."

Thompson was pleased with not only the student response to the new course, but also what she refers to as a "tremendous level of interest" among speakers for the course. The lineup of speakers who addressed the class of 21 students (18 women, three men) during the fall 2006 semester was an impressive one, including: Dr. Kim Magee, director of Human Resources for Finance at the Coca-Cola Company; Clayton State Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Sharon Hoffman; The Home Depot's Evelyn Swanson; and HR consultant Gary Wheeler.

The course looked at issues in different industries and different kinds of jobs, with the goal of both maximizing women's potential for society as a whole, and providing a comprehensive overview of topics that need to be discussed when looking at women as leaders.

### Dr. Betty Siegel speaks at Clayton State's fall graduation

Dr. Betty L. Siegel, recently-retired president of Kennesaw State University, served as the commencement speaker at Clayton State University's seventh Fall Graduation Ceremony on Thursday, Dec. 14, 2006.

Clayton State's fall 2006 Commencement was held at the First Baptist Church Jonesboro. A total of 580 students, the largest number ever for a single Clayton State commencement ceremony, graduated.

The first woman to head an institution of the University System of Georgia, Siegel presided over Kennesaw State from 1981 until her retirement in July 2006. Currently president emeritus and endowed chair of Leadership, Ethics and Character at KSU, Siegel has been recognized by a multitude of honors and awards over the years, including being named one of the 100 most influential Georgians nine times by "Georgia Trend" magazine.

### Clayton State Nursing dean speaks on Avian Flu

Dr. Lisa Eichelberger is dean of the School of Nursing at Clayton State and chair of the University's Avian Response Committee. Better than anyone else on the Clayton State campus, she realizes that knowledge of the Avian Flu is essential in minimizing its potential effects.

At a fall public health workshop, "You and the Avian Flu," Eichelberger discussed such important basic health issues as how the Avian Flu is transmitted and the symptoms.

Avian Flu is an influenza carried by birds. Infected birds have been found in 53 countries and 151 of the reported 256 human cases of Avian Flu have resulted in death – a mortality rate of 59 percent. However, that does not mean that the current version of Avian Flu will be the one that causes a pandemic.

"At this time, it is unknown how the virus will mutate, how it will evolve," notes Eichelberger, adding that among the unknown parameters is not only how contagious in human-to-human transmission the virus will be when it mutates, but how virulent, or deadly, it will be when it mutates.

Avian Flu is spread in the same basic manner as the seasonal flu that everyone is all-too-accustomed to... via respiratory droplets, blood, droppings, other secretions... in short, any fluids. Eichelberger notes that the symptoms are the same as with seasonal flu, except that they progress faster and are far more severe.

How do you prepare for the Avian Flu? Stay informed and get a flu shot. There are websites with information about the Avian Flu, notably [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) and Clayton State's <http://www.adminservices.clayton.edu/avian>.

### Clayton State DEX students excel at National Conference



Clayton State's DEX Chapter

The members of the Clayton State University chapter of Delta Epsilon Chi (DEX) had the most national wins in the South Division at this year's national DEX conference in Dallas.

Competing from Clayton State were: Jerome Hawk, Reggie McGraw, II, Shaun Washington, Felicia Janeway, Billy Evans, Diane Jack and Shawona Willis. Together, they brought back to Morrow more national awards than any other Clayton State DEX team.

The competition was a day long intensive academy where the Clayton State students had to compete to win the best business plan award. More than 2000 people competed in different events, and five Clayton State students won national honors. Hawk received a top 10 award for his ECommerce role-play, McGraw earned a top 10 award for Web Site Design Presentation, Washington and Evans won third place in the most competitive event (46 teams) at the conference and Janeway won top 10 in Advertising for her advertising campaign for the new Atlanta Aquarium.



The Bent Tree

Compared to many institutions, Clayton State University is still in its infancy. It hasn't had the luxury of time to build traditions or make memories like so many of Georgia's older institutions – or has it?



**MEMORIES:** Above: Legacy Court honors the Bent Tree and displays bricks laid in honor of friends of Clayton State. Bricks can be purchased from Alumni Relations for \$50. Above Collage, Left to Right: The Bent Tree (photo submitted by Rob Taylor); students surround the Bent Tree in this photo taken from the June 2, 1972 issue of the student paper "The Bent Tree;" the Bent Tree cast located at the Baker Center's northeast entrance; the Bent Tree cast was created in June 2001; the Bent Tree on a winter's day (photo submitted by Rob Taylor).

**THERE IS ONE THING, WHICH** through the years has become a symbol of Clayton State and its campus; a symbol, recognized by everyone who has ever been associated with the University, unique to the campus and its community.

The Bent Tree has been, almost unwittingly, an icon of the University since the very beginning. It has survived in the spirit of the student newspaper, founded in December 1969, which safeguards its name, and in the Bent Tree Society, formed in 2000 to recognize individuals and organizations that support the University. Although the nearly 90 year-old tree was cut down to make way for the new James M. Baker University Center, a cast sculpture of the icon can be viewed outside the northeast entrance of the Baker Center, surrounded by commemorative bricks donated by Clayton State alumni and friends... an area known as Legacy Court.

In 1969, Clayton Junior College was born and a local newspaper noted the event with a photograph of what was referred to as "The Question Tree." The tree resembled an inverted question mark and though you would have to stand on your head to see it, the logic of the question or the quest for knowledge seemed fitting for an institution of higher education.

"The Bent Tree was quickly adopted by Clayton State students as a symbol for the student newspaper – fittingly enough for an era of great questioning (the late 60's - early 70's)," as

noted in a previous article about the icon. Under the current president, Dr. Thomas K. Harden, the Bent Tree Society was founded and a cast made to preserve the icon forever as a sculpture and centerpiece for the campus.

There are hundreds of stories surrounding the Bent Tree; each as individual as the people who lived them. Friends would rendezvous there; hearts were won and lost at the foot of it; students studied at its base; and in celebration of the school's 25th anniversary, a time capsule was buried beneath it (and subsequently exhumed).

As Clayton State continues to grow, so does its history. Some day, maybe a hundred years from now, students and alumni will gather at the Bent Tree to read the names on Legacy Court and reminisce about stories told or untold that took place in the shadow of the icon. By then, other traditions and other icons will undoubtedly take their place in the University's memoirs; but none will tell the story of Clayton State's past more eloquently or more unforgettably than the University's first icon, the Bent Tree.

by Leigh G. Wills





## The Alice Smith Awards

Over the years, Clayton State has honored its faculty and staff in many ways. However, there is one award that stands out above the others; an honor voted on by the recipients' colleagues...

**ESTABLISHED IN 1995 BY LOCAL** philanthropist Joseph Smith in honor of his late wife, Alice, the Smith Awards are presented each spring and represent the pinnacle of the year for faculty and staff.

"Being recognized by my peers as an individual that goes above and beyond to promote Clayton State and my department still touches me deeply," says OITS' Debye Baird, the 2004 staff award winner.

Baird's comment is typical. When asked to describe their feelings about receiving the Smith Award, past recipients inevitably comment on the significance of a peer honor and the generosity of Smith in establishing the awards.

"I appreciate Mr. Smith's commitment to making this award possible," continues Baird. "I believe that employees need to feel needed and appreciated; the Smith Award does that and much more."

To date, the Smith Awards have recognized the efforts of two dozen Clayton State faculty and staff members. In addition, Joseph Smith has also established Clayton State scholarships in Teacher Education, in honor of his wife's profession, and in Nursing, in remembrance of the care she was given.

"I have received national and educational awards over the years, but nothing means as much as being recognized by the people you truly know and work with daily," said 1996 faculty

recipient Dr. Martha Beliveau upon her retirement in 2000.

"The award means an awful lot to me, because it was determined by my peers based on (hopefully) superior teaching, hard work, and dedication to the students and University," echoes Dr. Michael Deis, the 2003 faculty recipient.

A special perspective on the awards comes from Academic Affairs' Tammy Wilson, the 2003 staff winner.

"The Smith Award is a wonderful opportunity to recognize peers; however, it has been more enlightening for me to serve on the Smith Staff Award Committee and to be able to help select deserving staff members for the award."

A final word on the awards and their significance to Clayton State comes from the 1996 staff winner, OITS' Kevin Fitzgerald. "When I glance up and see my Smith Award, it reminds me to keep striving for the ideals that the award represents. 'Resting on one's laurels' will not work at Clayton State, where change is never ending, and the challenges keep on coming."

by John Shiffert



**CELEBRATING FACULTY AND STAFF:** Above: The Smith Award in the President's Office lists every winner since the award began in 1995. Above Collage, Left to Right: Past winners Tommy Daughtry, Dr. Peggy Capell, Martha Wicker and Jeff Jacobs; Dr. Gary May and Debye Baird; Mary Coursey, John Zubal, Dr. George Nakos and Dr. Mike Deis; The Alice J. Smith Award wall, located in the Baker Center Board Room, displays photographs of past winners; Past winners Tammy Wilson, Reginald Evans, Dr. Michiko Otaki and Dr. Lari Arjomand; Smith Awards.

by Leigh G. Wills

## Clayton State freshman encouraged to Dream big by Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin

**Y**ou could tell this young lady was going to go far. She had a poise and confidence that far exceeded her 18 years. Not many “kids” her age could handle the lights, camera and action of a television interview as coolly and collectively as she did...



“‘The Next Step’ program is about helping every Atlanta Public School graduate get a job or a college education. We have encouraged them to dream as big as they can and to ask us for help.”

- Mayor Shirley Franklin

**BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS:** Above: Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin met with Clayton State pre-nursing freshman, Gwendolyn Cummings at the Dec. 9, 2006 Next Step...the Atlanta Promise meeting. The Mayor asked Gwen to share her experience with the outgoing graduates of Atlanta Public Schools. “It’s hard,” said Gwen, “But worth it. I love school.”

**ESPECIALLY WHEN THAT INTERVIEW WAS** with City of Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin and WXIA’s 11Alive Weekend In-Depth anchor Donna Lowry.

Gwendolyn Cummings just completed her first semester at Clayton State University as a pre-nursing student. She doesn’t have a car, and if she couldn’t live near campus, she wouldn’t be attending Clayton State. Besides, she wants to get the full “college experience” and even though she didn’t know either of her roommates, she loves living in an apartment; virtually on her own.

Gwen is a 2006 graduate of Atlanta’s Grady High School and a recipient of the HOPE Scholarship, the PELL Grant, and a scholarship from Franklin’s NEXT STEP program. She grew up with her grandmother and aunt and says she’s known since her freshman year at Grady that she wanted to work in health care.

“I participated in the Health Care Academy as a freshman at Grady, and by the time I was a sophomore, I definitely knew I wanted to be a nurse. I like neonatal and maybe I’ll go on to get a master’s degree,” she said.

Mayor Franklin has “adopted” Atlanta’s high school seniors in an effort to bridge their transition to the “real world.” Working with the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency, “NEXT STEP...The Atlanta Promise” program, which offered assistance for the first time in 2005, challenges Atlanta Public School seniors to “dream big” and develop a “next step” plan for their future. The program is designed to offer hands-on assistance in planning life after high

school and Franklin has found the opportunity to be involved “very rewarding.”

“The idea grew out of years of public service,” said Franklin on the Sunday Weekend In-Depth show. “We visited 10 schools in 2005-2006 and told the students if they had plans, we wanted to help.”

Franklin invited seniors to “Meet with the Mayor,” and the first Saturday they had 100 students participate. Since then, the Mayor has seen more than 1500 students and last year more than 700 graduates were helped in their pursuit to go to college or technical school, or join the military or the workforce.

The program is open to all Atlanta Public School seniors and is made possible through the generous support of Atlanta businesses and community leaders.

“I knew I wanted to go to college, but never thought about how,” said Gwen to Lowry. “The Mayor has put her faith in me and it motivates me to succeed.”

Gwen is taking 15 credit hours and still has managed to make friends with some fellow pre-nursing students. She admits most of their time together is spent studying.

“There are seven of us altogether,” says Gwen. “We go to movie night once in a while and two or three nights a week we’ll have dinner – someone cooks – but that’s about all we do.” She goes on to say, “There’s not a lot of time for much else right now.”

by Lauren Graves

## Dr. Michiko Otaki International artist, teacher and lifelong learner

If ever a person consecrated her life to a passion, that person is Michiko Otaki and her passion is the piano. The two have proven inseparable since four-year-old Michiko met the instrument in the small coastal town of Hazu in Japan.

**HER PASSION CARRIED HER TO** America in 1977 where she studied at the San Francisco Conservatory, the Manhattan School of Music and the University of Miami. Earning a doctorate in one's field often lends closure to educational pursuits, but Michiko wanted to learn more.

"The day I say I am playing well is the day I better quit!" she laughs. And while her extensive United States and European tours and professional recordings bespeak her skill and devotion to her craft, she believes the ability to remain self-critical helps her grow as an artist.

In 1994 a friend of Clayton State University heard Michiko perform in Europe, contacted her manager and asked if the pianist would be interested in teaching at the University. At the time, Clayton State's Music Department was developing its baccalaureate music programs and needed strong faculty to carry the program forward.

While the University held its breath that Michiko would be interested in teaching, Michiko held her breath too. She was a free-lance performer, had no teaching experience and knew there were more qualified applicants in the queue. When told she was selected to join the faculty, Michiko made a vow.

"I made a promise to myself that I wouldn't let these people down, and I wouldn't make them think they made a mistake in hiring me," she recalls, her voice quiet but determined. Twelve years after her hire, an overwhelmed Michiko received Clayton State's highest faculty honor, the Alice Smith Faculty Award. She has

kept her vow; her dedication has not gone unnoticed.

The passion that brought Michiko from Japan has matured from piano performance to include a love for teaching. But more than piano technique and skill, she hopes to instill in her students the desire that keeps even accomplished artists pursuing greater perfection.

"I want them to keep growing as human beings. For the musician, how you play is who you are. It is so important to be compassionate and have empathy for others, because I don't think one can become a true artist unless one can understand the pain of others."

Michiko thanks her colleagues for their support, the administration for allowing her to teach while continuing to tour and the outstanding artists she performs with in Spivey Hall and around the world.

She also thanks the administration that hired her so many years ago and the faculty that mentored her. "I want them to know that their dream and enthusiasm for the Music Department lives on within me."

While Michiko has touched her students through her humility, grace and talent, it is the act of teaching that has helped her learn the most. From a four-year-old practicing in Japan to an internationally acclaimed artist, Michiko continues the journey she began in childhood and remains a student at heart.



“I came to America because of my piano teacher's recommendation. I thought I would study four years and go home, but the more I learned, the more I wanted to know more. And now it is almost 30 years later.”

- Dr. Michiko Otaki

by Leigh G. Wills

## Leonard Moreland Paying it forward at Clayton State

Leonard Moreland doesn't look much like your traditional bank president; his hair isn't snowy white, he doesn't sport the traditional shirt and tie or even wear a jacket...



“As a bank, you want to be a good corporate citizen. Once you catch the [higher education] vision, you want to jump on board, pay it forward so-to-speak. I know how difficult it is to pay for college; this is good for everyone.”

-Leonard Moreland

**GETTING TO KNOW YOU:** Leonard Moreland, a native Georgian born in Atlanta and raised in south DeKalb and Clayton Counties, graduated from Morrow High School and currently lives in Jonesboro with his wife, Kay. They have one daughter, Kristen.

**HE SAT AT HIS DESK**, leaned back in his chair, and with a relaxed and cordial demeanor, talked as if we had been friends for a long time.

Leonard may be a young man, but he has a venerable wealth of experience in his field. He began his banking career at Trust Company Bank of Clayton County while still in college at the University of West Georgia. In 1990 he helped set up the Southern Crescent Bank in Morrow where he served as vice president.

In 1996 he joined Heritage Bank as executive vice president, chief administrative officer and director of the bank and its parent, CCF Holding Company. In 2001 he was promoted to president of the bank and in January 2006, he became president and CEO.

Leonard's relationship with Clayton State began when good friend and former Lakers Women Basketball head coach A.C. McCullers invited him to a meeting with Mason Barfield, director of Athletics.

“I am a big fan of Mason's,” said Leonard. “He's one of the hardest working people I've ever met. I've developed a passion for the University just from watching how much he cares about these kids.”

One of Heritage Bank's first donations to the University was for sponsorship of the Heritage Bank Classic Basketball Tournament. In addition, Heritage Bank donated \$25,000 to the Athletic Department for locker room renovation.

Leonard serves Clayton State as president of the Athletics Associates, as a member of the

School of Business Advisory Board, (where Heritage Bank endowed a \$50,000 scholarship,) as vice chair of the Clayton State University Foundation, and as chair of the newly formed Clayton State Foundation Real Estate I, LLC.

“Tom [Harden, president of Clayton State] told us in a board meeting that he wanted to form a group of folks to advise him on buying real estate,” said Leonard of the LLC. “He has a real vision for expanding the University and has put together what I think is an outstanding group of people to help him.”

Leonard was raised by his mom with encouragement from his grandfather, Wilson Whitt, who Leonard says “left his fingerprints all over me.” He attended college for finance - a career choice made over a memorable tennis match with his uncle - on scholarships, financial aid and student loans.

This easy going, laid-back bank president is “doing good” for everyone with his vision to invest in the community he grew up in and cares deeply about. Leonard Moreland and Heritage Bank have joined with Clayton State University to realize a mutual vision for the future. But something else happened in the meantime that moves beyond your typical corporate partnership - new friendships have been forged, friendships that will last a very long time.

by Gid Rowell

## Mark Merchant Makes a living talking to “dummies”

After six months of asking patients to open wide for a cleaning, Mark Merchant (dental hygiene, '77) had an unanticipated career change — one where he would try his best to keep his mouth shut.

**SO MERCHANT PUT HIS CAREER** at Dr. Michael McDevitt's dental practice in Forest Park on hold for a while and pursued his childhood passion, an entertainment career as a comedian, specializing in ventriloquism.

Thirty years and millions of laughs later, Merchant's artistic gamble paid off. In 2004, he was named Entertainer of the Year for Crystal Cruise Lines, a company that has been hailed the world's best cruise line for the last 10 years by Condé Nast Traveler magazine.

Merchant's big break into the entertainment business was a bit of luck, as he actually got his first opportunity after applying for a public relations position with Carnival Cruise Lines in 1978. On his application, a section was reserved for special talents, and he listed his ventriloquist skills. It just so happened the cruise line was in need of a ventriloquist, and the rest was history.

"Nothing against the dental or public relations professions, but it just didn't do it for me creatively," says Merchant. "I love performing; I really come alive when I go on stage."

Merchant says he began learning ventriloquism at the age of 10 after his parents bought him a book and record on how to master the art. He first became interested after seeing the comedian/ventriloquist Jimmy Nelson doing his Nestlé's commercials with characters Farfel the talking dog and his pal Danny O'Day.

"My parents provided me a lot of artistic opportunities — I took piano lessons for one," says Merchant. "Ventriloquism was the one art

form that I would practice. I would sit in front of the mirror for hours, telling jokes and trying not to move my lips."

While in high school and college, Merchant performed at parties and other functions, continued to improve, and eventually paid his way through college with the skill.

One of Merchant's best stories is how he met his wife, Cindy. Back in the late 1980's, he was performing for a metro Atlanta elementary school. As part of his show, one of his puppet characters began flirting with the teacher, who was Cindy, and asked her out on a date.

The proposal from the "dummy" didn't fall on deaf ears. A few days later, Mark and Cindy went on their first date and were married two years later. Merchant's best man for the wedding was one of his puppets named Sherwood.

"My goal is make people believe that I'm having a conversation with one of my puppets... to suspend their disbelief and even forget that I'm a ventriloquist," he says.

His favorite place to perform is in Reno, NV, at John Ascuaga's Nugget. He has opened for Rich Little, Brenda Lee, and Tony Orlando there to name a few. He also worked four years as the comedy act at the Princess Casino in Freeport, Grand Bahama Island.



“I tell everyone, ventriloquism paid for my school, has allowed me to travel around the world five times and introduced me to my wife.”

-Mark Merchant

**TALKING POINTS:** Mark Merchant grew up in the Gresham Park area in Decatur, GA, and graduated from Walker High School. He and his wife currently live in Snellville, GA.

**GORDON BAKER** (A.A. Education '73) — Baker was named Clayton State University's Director of the Libraries in the summer of 2006. He had been head of the department's Public Services since 2004 and worked part-time in the Clayton State Library for 25 years. Before coming on board full-time at Clayton State, he spent 29 years in the Clayton County School System as a classroom teacher and media specialist, as well as serving as coordinator of Instructional Technology and Media Services for the Henry County School System.

**JOAN (THURMAN) MCELROY** (A.A. Office Administration '74) — After graduating from Clayton Junior in 1974, McElroy has worked at Clayton State for more than 20 years. She has worked in the Admissions/Registrar Office, the Computer Center and the last 17 years in Career Services. She has two children, Jeremy and Jarrett, and two grandchildren, Tristan and Jarrett, Jr. (J.J.).

**JAN DUNAWAY** (A.S. Nursing '75) — Dunaway, a resident of Decatur and sister of Clayton State alumna and Public Safety employee Joan Murphy, was honored in 2006 by the Georgia House in having Resolution 1808 resolved in her honor. A concerned citizen of DeKalb County for more than a decade, she has established neighborhood watch programs and become a self-educated and highly informed expert in the area of environmental protection.

**PAUL FOWLER** (A.A. Criminal Justice '75) — Fowler is employed at the Georgia Department of Revenue as a Public Utility Appraiser. He also has obtained a bachelor's and a master's degree from Georgia State.

**GAIL BUCKNER** (A.A. Education '77) — Buckner, the recipient of Clayton State's Most Outstanding Alumni Award in 2002 and a Georgia House Representative, was the Democratic Party candidate for Secretary of State in the 2006 Georgia general election.

**MARK MERCHANT** (A.A. Dental Hygiene '77) — Merchant, a Clayton Junior graduate living in Snellville, GA, is a renowned comedian, specializing in ventriloquism. In 2004, he was named Entertainer of the Year for Crystal Cruise Lines, regularly chosen as one of the top Cruise Lines.

**STEVE TESKE** (A.A. Political Science '81) — Teske has been a juvenile judge in Clayton County since 1999. Prior to his appointment, he was a trial attorney and partner in the law firm of Boswell & Teske. Teske received one of the Clayton State Alumni Association Outstanding Alumni Awards in 2006. He has received numerous other awards, including the Scales of Justice Award, the Judge Romae T. Powell Award, the Community Service Award by the Clayton County NAACP and the AIC Hero of Open Government Award. He is also author of the nationally acclaimed juvenile detention alternative titled "F.A.S.T. — S.T.A.R.T."

**DAVID T. HOLLAND** (A.A. Fine Arts '86) — Holland, of Westerville, OH, is a store manager of J.C. Penney located in Reynoldsburg, OH.

**EXA LYNN PYBUS** (A.S. Nursing '86) — Pybus, of Griffin, GA, is a R.N. in the Southern Regional Health System.

**JEFFREY W. WOOLLUMS** (B.B.A. Business Administration '86) — Woollums, of McDonough, GA, is a CPA and a partner in the firm Smith, Adcock and Company in Atlanta.

**DEE ANN TURNER** (A.S. Management '90) — Turner, of Peachtree City, GA, received one of the Clayton State Alumni Association Outstanding Alumni Awards in 2006. She is the Vice President for Human Resources at Chick-fil-A and is responsible for the recruitment, selection and retention for more than 500 corporate staff and 800 unit operators. She is also active in the Kenya Project, serves on the Board of Directors for the Burning Hearts Ministry and on the Board of Directors for Eagle Ranch, a foster home ministry.

**JUDITH CONWAY** (A.S. Nursing '90) — Conway is the minister of Congregational Care at First Baptist Church in Morrow, GA. She also assists at the Good Shepherd Clinic for Clayton County. Conway is the immediate past president of the Georgia Baptist Nursing Fellowship where she has held office for eight years and organized and participated in numerous mission trips.

**THOMAS GEORGE** (B.B.A. Management '90) — George was named Clayton State University's Most Distinguished Alumni in 2006. George, who worked at Clayton State for several years, is the director of Human Resources at North Georgia College & State University and lives in Cumming, GA. He is a former president of the Clayton State Alumni Association and is the vice president of the University System of Georgia Human Resources Association.

**SCOTT LUKAVSKY** (A.A.S. Aviation Maintenance Technology '90) — Lukavsky, of McDonough, GA, is a senior structures assembler with the Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company in Marietta, GA. He received a "Ruby Award" from the Federal Aviation Administration in 2000.

**RAY MCBERRY** (A.A. Education '90) — McBerry, an independent contractor in the advertising field who works primarily with the SBN Television Network in the south Atlanta region, was president of Dixie Broadcasting Radio and a 2006 Republican Party candidate for Governor.

**PRESTON L. HARDEN** (B.B.A. Business Management '92) — Harden, of Lawrenceville, GA, is employed by the Microsoft Corporation, in Alpharetta, GA and serves the East Region. He also has recently begun Magna Consulting Group, Inc., which provides executive coaching, consulting and career counseling services.

**ALLEN MCCALL** (A.A. Mathematics '92) — McCall, who was active in the Baptist Student Union at Clayton State, is the Fleet Administrator for Thrifty Car Rental in College Park, GA. He also holds a bachelor's degree from Georgia State.

**CHRIS MENARD** (B.B.A. Accounting '94) — Menard, of Stockbridge, GA, is owner of Triality Business Solutions, a business that specializes in Microsoft Office training. He was the first Microsoft Office Master Instructor worldwide for Office XP, 2000, and 97. Menard, who is a former employee of Clayton State, is a member of the Advisory Council for Microsoft Office Specialist testing.

**DAWN (RICHARDSON) GEPFER** (A.A.S. Marketing '96) — Gepfer, of Locust Grove, GA, works for Turner Broadcasting System, Inc., and is the Facility Manager for Turner Field.

**CHRISTOPHER A. PARKER** (B.B.A. Management '96) — Parker, of Atlanta, is a financial specialist with Wachovia. He received his MBA from Mercer University in 2006.

**TAMMIE B. BOWIE** (A.A.S. Medical Office Administration '97) — Bowie, of Covington, GA, is a senior account executive with BellSouth in Atlanta.

**ANDREW THOMAS OTWELL** (B.B.A. Computer Information Systems '97) — Otwell, of Powder Springs, GA, is the Product Marketing Manager with Oversight Systems, Inc. in Atlanta.

**JOE W. POWELL** (B.B.A. Computer Information Systems '97) — Powell, of Newnan, GA, is the president of the Great Outdoor Web.

**LINDA (CASTEEL) SEVIGNY** (B.S. Education '97) — Sevigny works in the Rockdale County Public Schools as a professional learning specialist. She recently earned her doctorate in Educational Leadership from Argosy University Sarasota after earning her master's degree from Piedmont. She also achieved NBCT status as an English teacher.

**CAROL (JOHNSON) WILLIAMS** (CERT. Industrial Services & Supervision '97) — Williams, of Locust, GA, and was married in 1998, is the executive assistant to the general manager at Toys R Us, Inc. in McDonough, GA.

**MIKE CRUMBLEY** (B.S. Nursing '98) — Crumbley was recently named director of Emergency Service at Henry Medical Center. He has been the manager of the Center's Emergency Department since January 2003. Mike and his wife, Chris, have two children, Matt and Katie and two stepchildren, Brandon and Brianna.

**BRENDA NELSON-PORTER** (B.A.S. Administrative Management '98) — Porter, of Newnan, GA, is the owner of Bridgette's Technology Consulting & Research Firm. She received her Ph.D. in Management with a concentration in Organizational Leadership from the University of Phoenix in 2004.

**SANDY L. WHITE** (A.A. Computer Information Systems '98) — White, of Morrow, GA, is the executive assistant/office manager for the Georgia Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda in Atlanta. She was a Democratic candidate for Georgia House District 76 in the 2006 primary.

**TRACI TANKERSLY RANKIN** (B.A. Education '98) — A former basketball letterwinner at Clayton State, she has been teaching at Bagley Middle School in Chatsworth, GA since 1998. She served as a basketball coach at the middle school for six years and as a coach at Murray County High School two seasons.

**AMANDA (JACKSON) COX** (B.M. Music Performance '99) — Cox, of McDonough, GA, is the network administrator for the Henry County Library System.

**CONSTANCE A. DIAL** (B.S. Nursing '99) — Dial, of McDonough, GA is a school nurse in the Henry County Schools at Flippen Elementary School in McDonough.

**ELIZABETH MAYO** (B.S. Health Care Management '99) — Mayo, of Stockbridge, GA, is manager of a dentist office in Decatur, GA. A four-year letterwinner on the women's basketball team in the early 1990s, Mayo is a volunteer at the Georgia Aquarium. She hopes for the opportunity to dive into the "Ocean Explorer" gallery.

**DAVID LINDLEY** (B.A.S. Management '99) — Lindley received one of the Clayton State Alumni Association Outstanding Alumni Awards in 2006. Formerly the Forest Park Chick-fil-A Dwarfhouse manager, he recently became the manager of the Truett's Grill in Griffin.

**BRIDGETT STROUD** (B.S. Nursing '99) — Stroud recently became a certified oncology nurse and is attending Emory University for her master's in Leadership and Administration. She was recently inducted into Sigma Theta Tau.

**JUAN M. WALKER** (B.B.A. Computer Information Systems '99) — Walker, of Sacramento, CA, is the senior database administrator for EMF Broadcasting in Sacramento. A member of Kappa Alpha Psi, he previously worked in database positions with Georgia Pacific and the Microsoft Corporation.

**CORY BALDWIN** (B.S. Health Care Management '00) — Baldwin was named the head coach of the Truett-McConnell College men's basketball team in the summer of 2006. Cory was a Laker basketball player from 1996-99 and was an assistant coach with the men's team from 1999-06. He also was an assistant professor at Clayton State, teaching Critical Thinking courses.

**T'ERICA (CARTER) ENDSLEY** (B.A. INTEGRATIVE STUDIES '00) — Endsley, of Atlanta, works in the Grady Health System as a privacy liaison.

**FELICIA GENOVESE** (B.S. Nursing '00) — Genovese, of Stockbridge, GA, works at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta in RN Infection Control. She is pursuing her MSN at Walden University.

**JOI MOORE** (B.A. Communication & Media Studies '00) — Moore, of Morrow, GA, is working for Drexina Nelson Photography in Atlanta.

**PERRY SLAUGHTER** (B.A. Technology Management '00) — Slaughter, owner of Run Fit Sports, Inc. in Macon, GA, was recently named the women's cross country coach at Wesleyan College in Macon. He became the school's first cross country coach in the fall of 2006.

**BAIDY SOW** (B.B.A. Computer Information Systems '00) — Sow, who lives in Snellville, GA, is a software quality engineer for Interface, Inc. based out of LaGrange, GA.

**SONYA E. STOVALL** (B.B.A. Accounting '00) — Stovall, of Lithonia, GA, is the cash applications processor for APAC, Inc. based in Alpharetta, GA.

**DEBRA WRIGHT** (B.B.A. Computer Information Systems '00) — Wright, of Loganville, GA, is a marketing analyst with UPS.

**KARRIE (STEPHENS) BROOKS** (B.S. Health Care Management '01) — Brooks, of Hampton, GA, works in administration at the Eye Consultants of Atlanta, located in Fayetteville, GA.

**MATT DAILEY** (B.I.T. Information Technology '01) — Dailey, of Villa Rica, GA, is the Manager of Corporate Security at Home Depot in Atlanta.

**LATISA R. KIDD** (B.S. Healthcare Management '01) — Kidd, of Stone Mountain, GA, works at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia in Atlanta and is the network management representative.

**ERIC M. LOGAN** (A.A.S. Computer Networking Technology '01) — Logan, of Thomaston, GA, is a systems administrator at Emory University in Atlanta.

**BRIAN MAGILL** (B.I.T. Information Technology '01) — Magill completed his Master of Arts in Film & Television from the Savannah College of Art and Design in March of 2006. He owns a freelance filmmaking and photography company in Savannah. He went to Kenya and Tanzania in June of 2006 to direct and produce a documentary film. He was the Loch mascot and SGA president from 2000-01.

**PAMELA D. MOORE** (B.S. Health Care Management '00) — Moore, of Lithonia, GA, works at the Children's Health Care of Atlanta.

**MELANIE (KIDD) NIBLETT** (B.A.S. Administrative Management '01) — Niblett is a paralegal at the firm Smith, Welch & Brittain in Barnesville, GA. She also received a certificate in Paralegal Studies from Clayton State in 2002. She is married to Michael Niblett and gave birth to her second child, Trista Abigail Niblett, in March of 2005.

**LISA CONLEY** (B.S. Integrative Studies '02) — Conley, of Mableton, GA, is a program coordinator at Georgia Tech in the school's Global Learning & Conference Center, which is part of the Distance Learning and Professional Education Department of the university.

CPT. CHARLES CROWNOVER (B.S. Technology Management '02) & MELISSA (BURRELL) CROWNOVER (B.B.A. '02) — Charles Crownover is a Cobra Pilot in the Marines. Melissa works for GE/Nuclear in Wilmington, NC, as a Business Intelligence Engineer. She received her MBA from UGA and an Industrial Engineer degree from Georgia Tech. Charles and Melissa met their senior year at Clayton State and were married in 2005.

VANDANA PANDEY (B.I.T. Information Technology '02) — Pandey, of Alpharetta, GA, is an enterprise tester with T-Mobile.

JANICE WILLIAMS (B.S. Health Care Management '02) — Williams graduated in July 2006 from the University of Phoenix with a master's in Health Care Administration.

MOHSIN ATIQ DAR (B.I.T Network Planning & Design '03) — Dar, who worked in the HUB at Clayton State, is the mercury product manager at Tech Access FZ L.L.C. in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

ANGELA (DAVIS) BADDOCK (B.A. Music '03) & SHAUN BADDOCK (B.I.T. Information Technology '05) — Davis and Baddock were married in February of 2005. Shaun, a former men's soccer player, works as a web specialist at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. Angela, who performs as a violin soloist and gives lessons, was scheduled to receive her master's in Music Education from UGA in December of 2006.

ANISHA DAVIS (B.S. Psychology & Human Services '03) — Davis, of Lithonia, GA, is employed with the State of Georgia as a case manager with the Department of Family and Children Services. She is pursuing master's in Psychology from Walden University.

SHARON R. DUHART (B.B.A. Management '03) — Duhart graduated from Georgia State in May of 2006 with a master's in Educational Research. She started the Ph.D. program at Georgia State in the fall of 2006. She is the business manager for the P-16 Initiatives Department at the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

GORDON C. HALL (B.I.T. Information Technology '03) — Hall, of Conyers, GA, is president and owner of AccurateScribe.com, Inc. He recently finished his MBA at Georgia State and planned to attend John Marshall Law School in the fall of 2006.

CORINNE R. HARRIS (B.B.A. Accounting '03) — A former women's basketball player, Harris, of Decatur, GA, is a staff accountant for Berkley Specialty Underwriting Managers in Atlanta.

MICHELLE SMITH (B.B.A. General Business '03) — Smith, a three-year letterwinner on the women's soccer team, is a commercial customer service representative with Nationwide Insurance in Lilburn, GA. She lives in Atlanta.

DENNIS J. BAKER (B.S. Integrative Studies '04) — Baker, of Fayetteville, GA, works in the Clayton County District Attorney's Office as the deputy chief investigator.

CHOLE (WONGÜS) BILAL (A.A.S. Office Administration '04) — Bilal, of Rex, GA, works at the LIUNA Local 515 in Atlanta as an administrative assistant.

HEATHER (WILLIAMS) CHOUDHURY (B.B.A. Management '04) — Choudhury, of Jonesboro, is a business analyst at SunTrust Bank.

ALEXANDER CLARK (B.A.S. Technology Management '04) — Clark, a 2004 graduate who lives in Lithonia, GA, is an operations analyst for the John H. Harland Company in Decatur, GA.

STACEY (CLOWERS) COLLIER (B.B.A. General Business '04) — Collier, of Union City, GA, is a financial aid officer in Georgia Tech's Office of Financial Aid Office in Atlanta.

DALE FULLER (B.A.S. Technology Management '04) — Fuller, of Griffin, GA, is the manager of information systems at Premier Transportation in Forest Park, GA.

LEAH (PHARR) MCCLURE (B.B.A. General Business '04) — McClure, a former soccer player for the Lakers, is a legal assistant for the Dellacona Law Firm in Macon, GA.

ZULYNETTE OLIVO (B.S. Health Care Management '04) — A former soccer player for the Lakers, Olivo is a Medicaid financial counselor at Grady Health System in Atlanta.

LORA (MCCALL) SALSMAN (B.B.A. Management '04) — Salsman, of Jackson, GA, is a sales administrator for Teijin Twaron, USA, located in Conyers, GA.

PENNY TINKER (B.S. Nursing '04) — Tinker, a former member of the Clayton State cross country team, is working as a nurse at the Banner Good Samaritan Medical Center in Phoenix.

JARICA WALDBURG (B.A. Communications & Media Studies '04) — Waldburg, of Atlanta, is currently seeking admission into the Georgia State University Law School.

ADRIANE WILLIS (B.A.S. Administrative Management '04) — Willis, of Hampton, GA, is employed by Clayton State as a Career Specialist in the Office of Career Services.

LEIGH (DUNCAN) WILLS (B.A. Integrative Studies '04) — Wills, of Hampton, GA, is employed by Clayton State as a Career Specialist in the Office of Career Services.

CHERYL J. WILLIAMS (B.S. HEALTH CARE MANAGEMENT '04) — Williams, of Griffin, GA, is employed by the Clayton County Board of Education in Jonesboro, GA, in Federal Programs, which is part of the Curriculum and Instruction Department.

QUALA A. WRIGHT (B.S. Integrative Studies '04) — With an Integrative Studies emphasis in Business Law, Wright, of Conyers, GA, is a contracts analyst with Lanier Worldwide, Inc. in Atlanta.

ROBIN AYLOR (B.B.A. Management '05) — Aylor is employed with the Georgia Independent School Association (GISA). She and her husband, who recently returned from Iraq out of the Georgia National Guard's 48th Brigade, 648th Engineer Battalion, Alpha Company, reside in Thomaston, GA.

ERLESE M. CARUTH (B.S. Psychology & Human Services '05) — Caruth, of Atlanta is an academic coordinator at Georgia Perimeter College in Atlanta. In the fall of 2006, she started a business named "After the Bell" for elementary through high school students. Services include after school programming, cultural activities, college preparation for high school students and advisement workshops.

CHRISTY MICHELLE CANNON (B.B.A. Management '05) — Cannon, of Tucson, AZ, is a purchasing supervisor at Maxi Switch in Tucson.

SANDRA L. HILL (B.A. Communications & Media Studies '05) — Hill, of Riverdale, GA, is a technical writer with Internet Security Systems in Atlanta.

LAUREN HUFF (B.A. Integrative Studies '05) — Huff, of Lithonia, GA, works as an adjuster at the AIG Claims Services in Alpharetta, GA.

AMANDA K. ORI (B.B.A. Accounting '05) — Ori, of Fayetteville, GA, is a staff accountant with Hargrave & Freeman, P.C. in Jonesboro, GA.

JOCELYN OKORO (B.S. Nursing '05) — Okoro, a former Clayton State soccer player and assistant coach, received a Distinguished Alumni Award in 2006 for her assistance in the Hurricane Katrina relief effort. She works at St. Joseph's Hospital in Atlanta.

MICHELLE B. PLEDGER (B.S. Psychology & Human Services '05) — Pledger, of Hampton, GA, works in the Personnel Department at the State Board of Pardons & Paroles.

MARTHA POUNDS (CERT. Paralegal Studies '05) — Pounds, of East Point, GA, is the director of Marketing at Killingsworth CPA/Southmark Consulting in Roswell, GA.

SHELIA RAMBECK (B.A.S. Technology Management '05) — Rambeck graduated from Georgia State University's College of Law in the summer of 2006. She also holds a certificate in Marketing and Merchandising and an associate degree in Marketing/Management in 2002. Rambeck lives in Peachtree City, GA, with her husband Steve and son Kevin.

TOMANIKA REDD (B.S. Integrative Studies '05) — Tomanika, a fixture in the Clayton State Student Life Office during her college days, is now the executive assistant for Student Life at Morehouse College. She lives in Fairburn, GA.

STACEY YOUNG RIVERS (B.A.S. Technology Management '05) — Rivers, of Riverdale, is a network manager for Turner Broadcasting, Inc. in Atlanta.

WILLIAM "JA" RIVERS (B.S. Biology '05) — From Jackson, GA, Rivers received a \$200,000 scholarship from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation to attend the Mercer University School of Medicine. He began classes at Mercer in the fall of 2006.

LISA B. SCROGGINS (B.S. Psychology & Human Services '05) — Scroggins, of Riverdale, GA, works at the State Board of Pardons and Paroles in Atlanta as a legal affairs coordinator.

ROBIN (HALLMARK) HILTON (B.S. Psychology & Human Services '06) — Hilton, of Elberton, GA, is a personal banker at Pinnacle Bank. While at Clayton State, she was active in the Student Government Association, the Baptist Student Union and the Ambassadors.

VOLCANO SHELTON (B.S. Psychology '06) — Shelton, who graduated in the spring of 2006, is pursuing his master's in Public Administration from Wichita State University in Kansas.

NATASHA BULLAY (B.A. Integrative Studies '06) — A resident of Atlanta, Bullay works at the Georgia Aquarium in the Guest Services Department.

MARTHA STROZIER (B.A.S. Administrative Management '06) — Strozier, of Covington, GA, is an account sales representative with Salem Associates, Inc. in Norcross, GA.

LISA EARLS (B.B.A. Marketing '06) — Earls, of Atlanta, is a pediatric sales specialist with Alliant Pharmaceuticals in Alpharetta, GA. While at Clayton State, Earls received the 2006 SAM's Club Leadership Award, the 2006 Laker Vision Award, was president of the SAM's Club, the 2005 Homecoming Queen and named to the dean's list multiple times.

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