

SPECIAL REPORT



Madison for Keeps

JMU community steps up to help students affected by economic hardship

BY ANDY PERRINE ('86)

It is a sign of our times that for the last two months one could follow on the Web a developing story of one Madison student's economic hardship narrowly averted.

On the morning of Sept. 15, a post on the university's Facebook wall mentioned Madison for Keeps, a university program aimed at raising funds for emergency student financial aid. Many more students than normal have reported this year that they and their families face tough times and Madison for Keeps is designed to help these students quickly.

In the ensuing Facebook discussion, a student posted this short yet plaintive comment:

Anthony Bowman would it only be available for in-state students? i'm out of state (MD), but i'm in serious danger of not being able to return for the spring.
September 15 at 11:14am · Report

Cory Clark in the long run any amount of money it takes to get a college education and experience from JMU is well worth it...I know it was for me.
September 15 at 12:54pm · Report

Diane London Haskins I would love to help but we have a junior and all we qualify for are stafford loans ... so we too are working hard to keep up with the tuition paymentsHas there been an appeal to alumni??? Let's all hope for better times ahead!!!

With that, Anthony Bowman joined a growing cast of characters in a drama repeating itself across the country at other universities.

That Anthony is not alone, or that JMU is not the only stage upon which this story is set, transforms this small spectacle into an epic.

But back to our story — after identifying himself as a student in need on Facebook, Anthony appeared in a video on YouTube and the university's Web site describing his situation.

Anthony told his story. Up until that moment the reality that students were facing hardships during this dismal economy, though sad, was conceptual

Joanne Carr, senior vice president for university advancement, helps install campus yard signs symbolizing the number of students helped by Madison for Keeps. Purple signs in the shape of graduates surround a banner that says, "Thanks to donations from JMU alumni and friends, every day more Dukes can stay Dukes."



Anthony Bowman appeared in a JMU video on YouTube to talk about his economic hardship. Madison for Keeps is JMU's response to help students at risk of not returning to school next semester.

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and impersonal to many. But then Anthony — a student with a name and a face and a mother struggling to pay for her son’s university education, and a member of the most beloved Marching Royal Dukes — informed us all that he might have to leave JMU because of economic stress.

That brought it home.

Buzz about Madison for Keeps began to grow. Alumni began to give online immediately and they responded to JMU students calling on behalf of the university annual fund. In fact, President Linwood Rose made a special appeal videotaped at the Madison Connection student call center the day students began calling for support for Madison for Keeps.



JMU President Linwood H. Rose appeared with Madison Connection student annual fund callers to ask alumni to support the Madison for Keeps initiative. More than 2,000 alumni have given more than \$219,000 (at press time) to hold open the door of opportunity for JMU students.

I was there at the videotaping, and the excitement in the room was over the top. Not only because a video featuring Dr. Rose was being shot there, but also because the nature of the phone calls was extraordinary.

Sarah Marvill ('10), a student caller, says, “The day we first met to learn about Madison for Keeps, this one girl started crying. She was like, ‘This is so cool that we’re going to be making calls to help other students.’”

Sarah is a veteran caller who has worked at Madison Connection since her sophomore year. But something was different about Madison for Keeps. “I’ve always felt that it was an honor to raise money for the university,” she says. “But raising money that you know will go directly to students who really need the help — that is huge. It’s a big motivator.”

Gifts began rolling in and the total dollars raised neared six figures just before Homecoming Weekend in October. As they do annually, the JMU Alumni Association Board of Directors came to town

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— SARAH MARVILL ('10),
Madison Connection student caller

to meet the Friday of Homecoming Weekend. Though the weather was wet and cold, spirits were high and hopeful to beat Villanova the next day. During their meeting, the board members decided to make a \$25,000 gift to Madison for Keeps, putting the total raised past \$100,000. (Read more, and see how the Class of 1999 responded on Page 44.)

Alumni board president A-J Fischer ('92) says, “We wanted to inspire all alumni to give to Madison for Keeps. Momentum increased and enough money was coming in to start helping students.”

That brings us back to Anthony.

The JMU Office of Financial Aid began evaluating student applications for Madison for Keeps in late October, and the first 13 grants were awarded. A campus display was designed to show campus the growing number of students helped by Madison for Keeps.

Photographs of Joanne Carr, senior vice president for university advancement, placing the first 13 “little graduates” that signified students helped were posted on the JMU Facebook fan page. Lo and behold, the first comment posted under these photographs was by Anthony.

As of press time, 45 students have received Madison for Keeps grants. Brad Barnett, senior associate director of financial aid at JMU, says, “I guarantee you that every one of the students receiving Madison for Keeps grants would have dropped out of school if it were not for this emergency assistance.”



Brad Barnett, senior associate director of financial aid at JMU, credits the Madison for Keeps emergency fundraising initiative with keeping 23 student in school. “I guarantee you that everyone of these students would have dropped out,” he explains.

While the rotten economy ravages families everywhere and students drop out because they no longer can afford tuition, at least at Madison this American epic takes a good turn.

*** To help support Madison students and let Dukes graduate as Dukes, send your gift to Madison for Keeps in the enclosed envelope or visit www.jmu.edu/madison4keeps.**

Anthony Bowman i'm one of the thirteen! thanks to all for the donations so far.....keep it coming!
October 30 at 9:55am · Report

Nicolle Boren Congratulations Anthony! Keep up the hard work going forward and it's nice to hear from someone who is getting the assistance they need from this. Keep up the good work donors! Your support is vital to these Dukes! I'm so proud of my JMU Alumni right now I could burst! :-)
October 30 at 10:47am · Report

Miles Christian Wilkerson me too
October 30 at 4:50pm · Report

Theresa Giarrusso Gerlando Good for you Anthony. Now make yourself and JMU proud!
October 30 at 5:11pm · Report

Moussa Sow It's nice to know there are still good people. I'm glad for those thirteen students.
October 31 at 6:01pm · Report

Diane London Haskins Love it...
Yesterday at 4:45pm · Report

Write a comment...