

[Student Leadership]

Cali-blue and CARPOOL

SafeRides celebrates three years of campus leadership

By CAITLIN HARRISON ('10)

In 2002, Lyndsey Walther-Thomas ('03) returned to campus from a student government conference at Texas A&M with a dream of starting an organization based on Texas A&M's CARPOOL (Caring Aggies R Protecting Over Our Lives), a designated driving program that serves the College Station area.

"I wanted SafeRides to be the kind of organization that attracted, developed and cultivated student leaders on campus," says Walther-Thomas. "Drinking is a huge issue on most college campuses, so the idea of having the premier leaders at JMU helping their peers make better choices was incredibly exciting."

Although Walther-Thomas began researching the program in 2001, it was not recognized as an organization by JMU until spring 2003. The executive members applied for 501(c)(3) status in 2006, and on Feb. 16, 2007, SafeRides began offering safe rides home. Since 2007, SafeRides has been serving the JMU community during academic semesters, driving students home on Fridays and Saturdays from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m.

"After becoming a nonprofit corporation with total liability



Caitlin Harrison ('10), far right, with JMU SafeRides members at the 2010 national conference at Texas A&M.

[Her Campus]

Student journalist selected by national online magazine

By SARA RIDDLE ('10)

As a journalism major, Cassie Potler ('10) is always looking for new and innovative opportunities to help her grow and expand her portfolio. When she saw a job posting for the online magazine *Her Campus* at Ed2010.com, a Web site that lists jobs and internships in the magazine industry, Potler didn't let the opportunity pass her by.

"I loved the idea and the approach the founders were taking, and I immediately applied," says Potler.

HerCampus.com is an online magazine founded by three female Harvard University students. The e-magazine informs college women on everything they need to know about style, health, love, dorm life, careers and world events. College journalists from 25 schools across the country contribute to the site.

Potler applied to the *Her Campus* staff last summer. "The two-part application process lasted a few weeks, and I found out that I officially had the position in August 2009," says Potler, who not only writes for the national *Her Campus* magazine, but she also launched a JMU edition: www.hercampus.com/school/jmu.

On Feb. 2, Potler launched the JMU edition. Articles featured on the JMU site are similar to those of HerCampus.com but have an added "local flair and campus relevance," she explains. "I'm open to have anyone write for me as long as their stories are written in the *Her Campus* 'voice' and are relevant to the JMU campus and community."

JMU InDesign professor Lynda Ramsey says, "I'm not surprised that Cassie was chosen for the national magazine. What is exceptional is that she was chosen among the elites of Harvard and 1,000 other U.S. colleges and universities."

Potler draws inspiration for her stories from everyday conversations. "I try to create stories



After working for the national *Her Campus* online magazine for six months, Cassie Potler ('10) launched a JMU edition.

that focus on what college students talk about, think about, dream about, worry about," she says. "When I hear my friends discussing something, the first thing I do is think about how that could be turned into a story."

One of Potler's favorite *Her Campus* stories is "The Hunger Project" about a nonprofit organization that aims to solve world hunger through the empowerment of women. "Writing the article was enlightening," says Potler, who enjoys writing stories that allow her to learn. "I saw how important it is not to give charity to those in need, but to give them their own means to become self-sustainable."

In addition to writing for *Her Campus*, Potler is a review editor for the *James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal* and a photographer for "PictureIt! JMU." When asked about the difficulty of balancing schoolwork with her other responsibilities, she says, "Life as a college student is always hectic, but I function better with a lot going on in my life." ❧

* Learn more about Potler and read one of her *Her Campus* essays on Page 26 and read all her articles at <http://hercampus.com/search/node/potler>.

and damage insurance coverage through Enterprise, and raising enough funds for a \$700-a-weekend operation, SafeRides was finally able to run," says Parks Watson ('10), SafeRides executive. "Since then we have given over 17,000 rides."

The SafeRides executive director oversees the directors and team leaders. The group's gen-

eral body members are divided into eight teams that are guided by student team leaders. The official color of SafeRides is Cali-blue, and members wear Cali-blue T-shirts.

"My favorite thing about SafeRides is the members," said Jessica Lake ('12). "All the members are so friendly and nice; so you always feel wel-

come. All the members are so passionate about SafeRides."

In February, six members of SafeRides attended the national SafeRides Programs Unite conference at Texas A&M with students from 11 other universities. CARPOOL facilitated discussions about fundraising, operating driving programs and risk management. JMU's SafeRides members