

BETHECHANGE

Madison Forever

Holding the door open for future generations of Dukes BY CARRIE COMBS ('07, '09M)

In 2009–10, hundreds of JMU students and their families faced urgent financial crises and had to make hard decisions on continuing their education. Without hesitation, JMU deployed Madison For Keeps, an emergency fundraising campaign, and thousands of alumni rallied to support the program. As a result more than 110 students were able to stay at Madison and earn their undergraduate degree. Now JMU is promoting Madison Forever. This permanent program gives JMU financial aid officers the flexibility to help students with the greatest financial needs — students like Amanda Matherly Stowe ('10), who says the Madison For Keeps financial support changed her life. Carrie Combs ('07, '09M) caught up with Stowe for *Madison* magazine.



Amanda Matherly Stowe ('10) took alumni's support through Madison For Keeps and is making a difference in her hometown of Danville, Va.

Madison: What was your Madison Experience like?

Amanda Matherly Stowe ('10): My hometown, Danville, Va., is very special to me and has a very special place in my heart. JMU was my first experience away from Danville, and it completely opened my eyes to a bigger world. I want to bring my Madison Experience back home and change lives. After graduation, I worked for a year at the Institute for Advance Learning and Research at the Institute for Sustainable and Renewable Resources in a grant-funded position. I helped develop novel plants and plant products to be grown and produced regionally by re-purposing some of the tobacco infrastructure that still resides in Southern Virginia. I just received the Youth Preservationist of the Year award from Preservation Virginia for this work.

Madison: What have you been up to recently?

Stowe: I started working as a job coach. Most of the people I serve have intellectual or developmental disabilities. The organization I'm with is the first in Danville. We're in a very economically depressed area, and we're starting an inclusion in the community program. In the past, those with intellectual and developmental disabilities have been institutionalized in a group home or alienated in special schools.

Madison: How did you make the transition from working in a lab to becoming a job coach?

Stowe: I was a biotechnology major and philosophy minor. Everybody at JMU always complains about why we're required to take GenEds, but it ends up helping in the long run. I was able to switch fields without much effort.

Madison: How did you hear about Madison For Keeps?

Stowe: My dad died in a tragic motorcycle accident during my senior year. He was the breadwinner of my family. My mom works some too, but we depended on his income. I had to really hunt for money to cover school costs. I was just blessed that JMU offered Madison For Keeps.

Madison: If you could tell donors one thing, what would it be?

Stowe: If you want to make a difference in someone's life, give to Madison Forever. You are directly changing a life by giving someone the opportunity to finish what he or she worked so hard to achieve. I was so close to graduation — if I had to give that up it would have been heartbreaking. 



Watch the Madison Forever video with Dr. Carrier. www.jmu.edu/link/forever

*Read more about Amanda Matherly Stowe ('10) at www.jmu.edu/madisonforever/MandyStowe.shtml