

College of Education alumnae rock the Purple and Gold

Virginia teachers share their Madison Experience in the classroom BY AMELIA WOOD ('13)

Alumni from the JMU College of Education are spreading the Purple Pride among Virginia's youth as more and more JMU Dukes are teaching at schools in the commonwealth. Two Northern Virginia schools count 15 alumnae among their veteran and new faculty. Eight alumnae teach at George W. Watkins Elementary School in New Kent County, and seven alumnae teach at Swift Creek Middle School in Chesterfield County.

JMU alumnae faculty members at George Watkins Elementary look forward to the school's annual College Day so they can show off a sea of JMU purple and gold.

"Madison memories abound," says **Linda Hewitt Upshaw ('68)**, a remediation teacher at George Watkins. She is also proud of her nephew **Joey Hewitt ('15)**, a JMU freshman.

Barbara Griffith Martin ('70) is a special education teacher at George Watkins. She was inspired to choose special education because of the wonderful professors who helped her make the right career choice. After graduation she decided to teach in Virginia Beach for two years and resumed teaching special education in Fairfax County, Va. She moved to New Kent County in 2003.

Margaret "Peg" Honecker Noctor ('79), a New Jersey native, says her Madison Experience was the catalyst for choosing to move to Virginia to raise her family. She says that JMU helped prepare her for working as the librarian at George Watkins. Two of her children also chose JMU, daughters **Maggie ('08)** and **Courtney ('11)**.

Marie Kelley Owens ('89M) joined New Kent County Public Schools in 2000 after working for 10 years in a variety of clinical settings. Owens says JMU's speech pathology program and faculty members did a wonderful job of preparing her.

History major **Catherine Moffett ('90)** says she is a more well-rounded person able to teach a variety of subjects to her students because she was able to take classes in many content areas at JMU. Her Madison Experience also made her appreciate friendships and enjoy the simple things in life like those great campus days in early spring when she could finally wear shorts with her JMU sweatshirt.

Fifth-grade teacher **Emily Gillis Williams ('96)** is also an emergency medical technician. "I use my experience as our fire department's treasurer to teach my students math. They are so interested in what I do outside of school that they become enthusiastic about those concepts," says Williams.

First-grade teacher **Jessica Chenault Mistr ('97)** says JMU's early childhood education program allows frequent observations of master teachers. "Seeing those experienced teachers, who made every day in the classroom look so easy, helped me appreciate all of the behind-the-scenes preparation I do each day."

Renee Nice McCarthy ('09M) and her husband, **Steven McCarthy ('09)**, live in Richmond, Va. "The education program at JMU provided outstanding preparation for real-life teaching and classroom settings," says McCarthy. "Many of my JMU professors had K-12 teaching experience and were able to give me practical advice that is invaluable in the classroom." She shares Madison College stories with her grandmother **Gloria Schaefer Good ('58)**.

The "George Watkins Eight" say JMU holds many memories. When they wear their purple and gold, they want others to ask "Why was James Madison so special?" Their collective answer is: "Do you have a couple hours?"

A similar sentiment is shared by the seven JMU alumnae, who teach at Swift Creek Middle School in Chesterfield County.



George Watkins faculty members: (Front row, l-r): Marie Owens ('89M), Peg Noctor ('79), Catherine Moffett ('90) and Renee McCarthy ('09M). (Back row): Jessica Mistr ('97), Linda Upshaw ('68), Barbara Martin ('70) and Emily Williams ('96).

and **Dave Magnone**, play '70s music, contemporary tunes and original songs at local and regional venues. Last spring they rocked out at the Mockingbird in Staunton, Va. Layman is married to **Peggy Jones Layman ('72)**, and they have a daughter who graduated from JMU, **Jessica Layman Herr ('02)**. Bailey is married to **Larri Lou Shacklette ('72)**. * **David Grimes** was elected president of the Virginia Association of Commonwealth's Attorneys.

He has served as the Pittsylvania County Commonwealth's Attorney since 1992 and has been a member of the statewide prosecutors' association for 20 years. Grimes previously served the Virginia Association of Commonwealth's Attorneys as secretary-treasurer, vice president and president-elect. An independent legislative watchdog, the association represents more than 800 state prosecutors before the General Assembly and state boards and commis-



Gabby Haze, which includes (l-r) Carl Bailey ('72), W. Dan Layman ('71) and Dave Magnone ('72), rock the Mockingbird in Staunton, Va. (Background): Bandmate Bob Yetzer.

Sara Critz ('09, '10M) is in her second year teaching algebra. "As a JMU student I realized I was surrounded by amazing people with many talents. I am lucky to work with many of them as alumni!"

Psychology major **Rachele D. Jackson ('07)** is a school counselor for Swift Creek. She says she chose her field after being inspired by her work with the JMU Psychology Peer Advisers. "I love working with middle-school students! I enjoy their humor and the connections I make with them!"

Swift Creek Middle School Principal **Mary T. Robinson ('76, '79M)** has taught middle- and high-school English and developed "an alternative program for over-aged, under-achieving middle-school students." She has had the pleasure of working with several JMU alumni, and she has represented Chesterfield County Public Schools at the JMU's annual Teacher Recruitment Day for several years.

Amy Maddox ('86) has been teaching for 25 years. She met her husband at JMU and is now proud to say her son is a Duke. She was incredibly involved in her community as a student, and she continues her community involvement at Swift Creek.

A JMU legacy **Emily Barker ('08, '10M)** followed her mother, father and brother to JMU and into a teaching career. **Deborah Sheeler Barker ('75), Frank Barker ('75) and Matt Barker ('04, '05M)** are all JMU Dukes. Emily Barker says the most rewarding things about teaching are "remembering the first moment that a student actually asks how your day is, the smile a student has when they do well on a test after spending the time to study, or the look of that 'Aha' moment when a student really gets it."

Melissa D. Atkinson ('79) teaches speech and theater at Swift Creek. Though it is only her second year at the school, she has been

teaching for 29 years. "JMU provided me with the tools to become more well-rounded and perceptive," says Atkinson, who enjoys the many JMU connections among Virginia teachers. "**Peg Honecker Noctor** from George Watkins Elementary is an Alpha Sigma Tau sorority sister from my JMU days! She was the president of our sorority, and I served as pledge master. I spent 22 years teaching

in New Kent County. It was there that Peg became my neighbor, and I had the pleasure of teaching her children!"

Leslie Vaughn ('83) is a librarian at Swift Creek Middle School. She considers JMU "one of the most friendly universities," and recalls a time when "President Ronald Carrier called to check on me my freshman year when I was sick. I thought someone was playing a joke on me, but it was really him!"

Bonnie Burnham Lashley ('84) graduated with a major in management information systems. She began her career as a dentist after attending

the University of North Carolina School of Dentistry. She left the dentistry practice in 2003 due to severe migraines. "I became a career switcher and started teaching at Swift Creek Middle School in 2005," she says. "Although I wasn't an education major, my Madison Experience helped prepare me for every career I've had. I still remain in contact with my JMU friends and sorority sisters from Phi Mu.

Both George Watkins Elementary School and Swift Creek Middle School faculties host a healthy helping of Purple Pride and a top-notch Madison education. ❧

* Learn more about other JMU College of Education alumni at www.jmu.edu/coe/alumni/.



Swift Creek alumnae faculty: (Back row, l-r): **Melissa Atkinson ('79), Mary Robinson ('76, '79M), Leslie Vaughn ('83), Bonnie Lashley ('84), Amy Maddox.** (Front row, l-r) **Emily Barker ('75), Rachele Jackson ('07), Sara Critz ('09, '10).**

sions. After earning a law degree at T.C. Williams School of Law at the University of Richmond, Grimes was admitted to the bar in 1977 and spent two years with a law firm in Rockville, Md. The political science major moved to Gretna, Va., in 1979 to become an assistant prosecutor under former commonwealth's attorney Glenn Berger. Grimes lives in Chatham with his wife, **Dorothy "Dottie" Mullins Grimes ('74)**, a retired guidance counselor for Gretna

High School. * **Sheila Jamison-Schwartz** retired five years ago. She taught elementary music two years in Augusta County, Va., and 31 years in Virginia Beach. After earning a Bachelor of Music Education degree, she taught hundreds of piano students and sang in the Virginia Opera Chorus for 10 years. She still sings with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra Chorus and is a docent at the Hermitage Museum and the Chrysler Museum.

76 Sue Nelson-Sargeant, a preschool speech-language therapist with Spotsylvania County Public Schools, presented "Oh Say What You Sing! Increasing Communication Skills through Collaboration of Speech and Music Therapy" at the 2011 National Council for Exceptional Children Convention. Nelson-Sargeant co-presented with her daughter, Rachel Sargeant, a first-year teacher at King George Primary School, and Sarah Winkler, a music therapist with

Spotsylvania County schools. * **Daniel Webster** writes, "On May 4, 2011, I was elected president of the Manchester Township, Ocean City, N.J., Board of Education by my fellow board members. I also continue to serve as the vice president for finance on the New Jersey School Boards Association. In that capacity, I just returned from the 71st Annual National School Boards Association Delegate Assembly and Convention in San Francisco, Calif.