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## We Are ... Marshall, June 11, 2004

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# We Are...Marshall!

THE NEWSLETTER FOR MARSHALL UNIVERSITY • JUNE 11, 2004

## Writing Camp to Tackle Issues of Race

“Being Black, Being White: What It’s Like,” a writing camp that will allow high school students to explore the topic of race, will be conducted July 19-23 on the Huntington campus.

The camp is for students who want to develop their creative and leadership potential, improve their logic and communication skills, and enjoy the company of other students. It is sponsored by the Marshall University Writing Project, the Division of Multicultural Affairs and the College of Education and Human Services.

Tuition for the program, scheduled from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. daily in Corbly Hall room 467, is \$45. Some scholarships will be available on the basis of need.

National Writing Project consultants from the Huntington area will coordinate the activities. They include Samuel Moore, a teacher and pastor who has years of experience working with people of all ages; Beth Darby, who started a teen book club at the Cabell Public Library and is an experienced journal writer; Karen McComas, associate professor of communication disorders who teaches computer applications for the Writing Project; and Dr. Edwina Pendarvis, professor of gifted education who taught in last year’s summer writing camp.

### Calligraphy On Display at Drinko Library

Two demonstrations of artistic handwriting are on display on the third floor of the Drinko Library, thanks to the Huntington Calligraphers’ Guild.

“The “Write Like an Egyptian” exhibit, assembled by the Guild in conjunction with the Huntington Museum of Art, shows members incorporating Egyptian symbols, scenes, and hieroglyphics into their calligraphy.

The other exhibit, “For Letters and Verse,” features poetry written by Marshall faculty and students interpreted and brought to life through the calligrapher’s art.

“We are delighted when we can provide a superb show like the Guild’s in our library,” said Monica Brooks, Associate Dean of the University Libraries. “Our students, who are here to study, do research or homework, deserve a nice break in which they can enjoy the exhibit and learn a little more about something new.”

(continued on page 4)

Since this is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education, which integrated public schools, this program will provide an opportunity for students to think, discuss, and write about what it means to be black or white—or both or neither—in today’s society, according to Pendarvis.

Students will participate in a variety of activities, including creating dialogues, role-playing, interpretive reading, and analyzing songs and film, story-telling, writing and illuminating personal journals (using watercolor and collage), writing poems and stories,

(continued on page 2)

## Sharon Sluss is Employee of the Month

Sharon Sluss, business manager in the College of Education and Human Services, has been named the Employee of the Month for May, according to Jim Stephens, chair of the Employee of the Month Selection Committee.

Sluss, who has been employed at Marshall for 16 years, was nominated by Dr. Tony Williams, Interim Dean of the College of Education and Human Services.

In his nomination, he wrote, “The College of Education and Human Services is a very large and complex academic unit. In addition to the academic

(continued on page 3)



Sharon Sluss (center), Employee of the Month for May, received the award from Dr. Tony Williams (left), Interim Dean of the College of Education and Human Services, and Jim Stephens, Director of Human Resource Services.

## Profile: Ralph Taylor

A series on interesting Marshall University people.



Ralph Taylor

He works with lizards, frogs, mussels, and especially snails, all the fun things, he'll tell you with contagious enthusiasm.

And come this summer he'll be the captain of a state-of-the-art equipped houseboat which will prowl the waterways of this region doing aquatic research, focusing on the mussels and snails he's spent a lifetime studying.

For Dr. Ralph Taylor, a longtime faculty member and administrator in Biology and Integrated Sciences, it will be just another day at the office, except this office will be aboard a 43-foot boat fully equipped with radar, dive equipment, underwater camera—a sophisticated floating laboratory which will be staffed by graduate students all of whom must be certified scuba divers to qualify for the training.

The houseboat was purchased by the Marshall University Research Corporation to further aquatic research in the abundant rivers, lakes and streams that dot this region and it is now undergoing renovations. And since somebody has to drive the boat, Taylor recently completed a rigorous course which gives him certification to captain a vessel up to 100 tons although the Marshall boat weighs in at "only" 25,000-30,000 pounds, he says.

Taylor has been doing aquatic research for years. Recently he's been working on a fresh water mussel project primarily in the Ohio River with Dr. Tom Jones of the Integrated Sciences and Technology Department. And this summer he and his crew of students are heading for Boomer, West Va., to do an environmental impact study before a new sewer project is approved. Over the past few years, he and students have worked as consultants on projects not only throughout West Virginia but in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and North Carolina as well.

It's hands-on training for the students--the best kind, Taylor ardently believes. "They get actual training on the water. They're doing the kind of work being done by consulting or engineering firms around the country. Our hope is they'll be hired by these companies and the advantage is that they are already trained, they'll be able to begin contributing right away. Most won't have to go through lengthy and expensive company training programs."

And just what is it about mussels and snails, to most people two low-life bottom dwellers which don't rate much thought, much less expensive research that makes them worthy of so much attention?

Taylor explains that, although snails may seem unimportant in many cases, they are the basis of the food chain. "A lot of other organisms feed on snails and they clean up the garbage in the streams. But the garbage contains all sorts of harmful stuff so when snails do their thing, pollution plays havoc with them ... When the environment becomes polluted for snails, it's a good bet it's not good for humans as well because snails can survive traumas we can't. They're a good monitoring device for the environment."

In the case of mussels, many are on the federal endangered or imperiled list and as such are under

*(continued on page 4)*

## Sharon Sluss

from Page 1

programs within the college, numerous university programs and services are also a part of the college. These include the Autism Training Center, the H.E.L.P. program, the Child Development Academy, the Early Education Center, and the Testing Center. Sharon monitors and tracks the budget activities for the total college. Many times BANNER has shown one amount but Sharon's records will show another figure. Inevitably Sharon's figures are correct and she has prevented us from making many mistakes with embarrassing consequences."

In conclusion, Williams praised Sluss for "...her institutional loyalty, dedicated work ethic, and for her exemplary performance as COEHS business manager that goes beyond her job description and the call of duty."

She was presented with a check for \$100, a plaque and a balloon bouquet by Jim Stephens, Director of Human Resource Services.

## Bluetrane to Headline Benefit for Two Pet-Oriented Charities

Fido, Fluffy and their friends will be there and so will Bluetrane, Marshall's fabled faculty jazz ensemble. They're joining forces for the Cause for Paws, a parade for pets which takes place Saturday, June 19 at Huntington's Ritter Park.

The sponsored walk, which begins with registration at 8:30 a.m. at the Ritter Park shelter, will benefit two local organizations—Little Victories Animal Rescue Group, which is planning to build a no-kill shelter, and Help for Animals, Inc., which provides low-cost spay-neuter services.

Vicki Stroehrer, a part-time instructor in the department of music and one of the event organizers, said activities run from 9:30 a.m. to noon. "People can walk alone or they can bring their pet to walk with them," Stroehrer said.

Entry fee is \$10 for adults, \$5 for children, and donations will be accepted. T-shirts will be given to all participants. Among the other activities are a pet costume contest and pet toenail cutting. Pet vendors also will be on hand, and pet photos may be taken.

Registration forms are accessible at [www.littlevictories.net](http://www.littlevictories.net), and more information is available by calling (304) 526-9107.

Performing for Bluetrane, beginning at about 10 a.m., will be Ed Bingham on saxophone, Marshall Onofrio on trumpet, Mike Stroehrer on trombone, Jay Flippin on piano, Mark Zanter on bass and Ben Miller on drums. Several other Marshall faculty members are involved in the organization and running of the event.

Bluetrane was formed in 1999. Last summer it played at the Snowshoe Institute at Snowshoe Mountain and will return there in July. The group performed at the Buddy Rogers Jazz Festival in Dayton, Ohio, and will be running the jazz band camp during the annual Jazz-MU-Tazz festival later this month.

# MUAA Begins Affinity Program with Liberty Mutual

The Marshall University Alumni Association has begun an affinity program with Liberty Mutual that makes the more than 90,000 Marshall alumni instantly eligible to receive additional discounts—up to 15 percent on auto and five percent on homeowners' insurance.

In addition to premium discounts, the Marshall/Liberty Mutual program offers 24-hour claims reporting, 12-month guaranteed rates, premium payment through direct-billing or automatic checking account deduction, and a dedicated customer phone number with extended sales and service hours.

"We are excited to begin a partnership with Liberty Mutual and provide our alumni and friends of Marshall University services that can benefit them," said Alumni Association president Tom Harris. "Liberty Mutual is a well-known, national company with a wonderful reputation for service."

Boston-based Liberty Mutual Group ([www.libertymutual.com](http://www.libertymutual.com)) a diversified international group of insurance companies, is the eighth-largest provider of personal insurance providers in the U.S., including private passenger auto,

## Learning Disabilities Program Underway

The 24<sup>th</sup> annual Summer Learning Disabilities Program, a cooperative venture between Marshall and the Cabell County Schools, began June 10 at Guyandotte Elementary School.

The program is offered each summer to children who have learning disabilities and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Dr. Barbara Guyer, professor of special education and director of the Higher Education for Learning Problems program, said the summer program seeks to improve basic skills and social skills of children in

*(continued on page 4)*

homeowners, valuable possessions and personal liability.

Interested alumni can enroll in Group Savings Plus or obtain a no-obligation quote by visiting one of Liberty Mutual's 360 personal insurance sales offices across the U.S. or by calling 1-800-279-1387 in West Virginia, or 1-800-524-9400 out of state. Information can also be obtained by visiting the MUAA Web site at [www.marshall.edu/alumni/](http://www.marshall.edu/alumni/), and clicking on the marketplace link to access the Liberty Mutual Web site.

## Enrollment Management Seeks Recipes for Collection

It can be your grandmother's treasured recipe, a tried and true family favorite, or a quick dish just perfect for the time-deprived. Whatever its origin, if you have a favorite dish and you're willing to share the recipe, Enrollment Management wants to hear from you.

They're developing a new student recruitment and retention tool in the form of a Parent Cookbook. The cookbook will include not only recipes but also tips for parents to stay involved with their child once they are a Marshall student. The free publication will include tips from parents, testimonials from students, financial aid information, scholarship material, an academic calendar and other ways for parents to stay connected.

The Marshall community can help in several ways. Since approximately 180 recipes are needed, Enrollment Management is soliciting recipes which can be sent either through the online form or on a printable form available at [www.alumniconnections.com/Marshall/](http://www.alumniconnections.com/Marshall/). In addition, since the project is in the initial planning stage, EM wants to hear suggestions and ideas for stories or special interest pieces that parents might want to read.

Two versions of the cookbook will be produced. One will focus on recruitment, parents of prospects, and the other will target parents of currently enrolled students. The recipes will remain the same but the other content will change.

Currently the deadline for receiving all recipes is July 1, 2004.

## Writing Camp from Page 1

"blogging," and using the computer to share their writing with students in summer programs in other locations. A maximum of 20 students will be admitted to the program.

For further information or to register, call Pendarvis at ext. 2855 or contact her at [pendarvi@marshall.edu](mailto:pendarvi@marshall.edu).

## We Are...Marshall!

Published by University Communications, with offices in Huntington (213 Old Main) and South Charleston (312 Administration Building).

The next regular issue of *We Are...Marshall!* will carry an issue date of June 25, 2004.

Deadline is June 18.

Articles or other materials for consideration should be sent to Pat Dickson, editor, at the South Charleston campus or by e-mail to [pdickson@marshall.edu](mailto:pdickson@marshall.edu).



## **Ralph Taylor** *from Page 3*

federal protection. That means that any time water or sewer projects, a bridge repair or replacement, or any other project that involves rivers or streams is proposed, an environmental impact study must be done. That's where the Marshall research team comes in.

"People aren't aware of what we have here and what we're doing," he says. "We have the most recent high-level technology and state-of-the-art computers. We're turning out students who, when they finish, are ready to go to work immediately for an engineering or consulting firm doing environmental work. The Integrated Science program is a great program. We just got through our five-year review and we got the designation showing that not only are we doing what we should be doing but we're doing it well."

The newly refurbished houseboat can sleep 8-10 people and will allow students to live on the vessel while doing hands-on research. "It's fully equipped with a galley, kitchen facilities, all kinds of gear," Taylor says. "The results will be limited only by our creativity and what we can obtain money to do. We have just about anything one can imagine for a Cousteau-type program. We just don't go out into oceans, we work primarily in rivers, streams and lakes in this region."

Actually Taylor's quest to research snails took him to a remote area of China in 1983 where he spent three weeks studying Chinese snails which were the food of choice for wintering Siberian cranes. "This was before China opened up to Westerners and there was no electricity, running water and few other modern conveniences," he recalls. But with the help of his accommodating hostess and some Chinese graduate students who spoke a little English, he was able to communicate well enough to complete valuable research.

And his visit had an unexpected result. Taylor became an unofficial ambassador and recruiter for Marshall. Two of the Chinese students he worked with came to Marshall to continue their studies and over the next several years others followed.

Taylor's talents and interests don't end at the water's edge. He's a certified locksmith who did a two-year apprenticeship with a locksmith/watchmaker and can repair all of kinds of antique clocks. He's also an accomplished musician whose eclectic repertoire runs the gamut from bluegrass to classical.

His fascination with clocks began with an antique clock bought by his father at a yard sale. "We oiled it and it ran, and later we found an old clock in a barn where my sister housed her pony. I tore it apart, fixed a broken spring and it ran fine. I met an old gentleman who was a locksmith and a watchmaker. He had arthritis and he agreed if I would be his legs and pick up and deliver his work, he would teach me clock and watch repair. I apprenticed under him for two years. I got my doctorate one week and my certificate as a watchmaker the next weekend. I'm not sure which would have been better for me to do as a career," he says with a laugh.

Clock repair is a dying art, he believes. But for Taylor the work is a labor of love, although intensive at times. Many of the clocks he works on are so old no parts are available so he makes his own. "I make parts for any kind of clocks, grandfather, mantel clocks, dome clocks; I fix all kinds." But only for very good friends, colleagues or someone who makes a good case for taking on the work, he adds hastily. He has an extensive collection himself, with the oldest a clock dating from 1740 which he bought at an auction 40 years ago. But there's no cacophony of gonging, ringing or clicking in his home. "I don't wind any of them," he says with amusement. "I just have a wall clock and a kitchen clock."

And he didn't start out to be a biologist. He was a music major as an undergraduate who just "backed into a degree in biology," he says. He's been a musician since age five who plays piano, trombone, tuba, euphonium and string bass. He was a member of The Sweeney Brothers bluegrass group for several years, and plays regularly with the Marshall Monday evening symphonic band and a student ensemble on Thursdays.

"I just love to play," he says enthusiastically. He joined the bluegrass group after overhearing a group of students talking about playing. "When I asked them what they played, they said bluegrass and I said, 'What's that?' It turned out they needed a string bass player and although I had never played string bass, I bought one, learned three chords which is about all you need to play bluegrass and joined the band. We played all up and down the east coast for the next 15 years."

He's served in a wide array of positions since joining Marshall 32 years ago. He recently stepped down as chair of Integrated Science and Technology. He has served in an associate dean position in the College of Science and was interim dean for one year. He was the director of the SCORES for five years and served in various faculty positions. He's worked extensively with students both as an advisor and in research.

Today he's cutting back to half time, in preparation for retirement in three years. "I have loved every minute of my time at Marshall," he says with his usual good humor. "... I've always had enough variety that I could go from administration to the classroom. I've been involved with all kinds of activities with students, with doing research. That keeps things lively; you're not in a classroom all the time. And of course, aquatic research is one of the most fascinating things in my life. I jokingly say I'm a Gemini so I change all the time!"

"I don't get bored," he says candidly. "I've been in the classroom for 45 years, since I started teaching at the high school level. I've had wonderful support and good people around me at Marshall. I've been lucky to have had supportive presidents and administrators. A lot of good, hard-working people work here and they make your job easier."

## **Learning Disabilities** *from Page 2*

kindergarten to sixth grade. She said 75 to 100 students attend each summer and normally a significant improvement is seen in the children.

"We always hope their basic skills will improve and usually students make a significant improvement in spelling and math," Guyer said.

## **Calligraphy** *from Page 1*

Wanda Cummings, project coordinator for the guild, made the traveling show available to the Marshall community.

The exhibit runs through June. Visitors are invited to view the show during the Libraries' summer business hours which are available at ext. 2320. For more information and a schedule of upcoming exhibits, contact Books at ext. 6613 or at [brooks@marshall.edu](mailto:brooks@marshall.edu).