Faculty recognized at Research Day

A broad range of graduate and undergraduate academic and creative endeavors were showcased March 29 during Northwestern State University’s 25th annual Research Day. Students offered 15-minute oral presentations on their topics followed by brief question and answer sessions. In addition to dozens of concurrent paper sessions, the day included musical presentations, a poster session, awards presentations and a keynote address by Louisiana Poet Laureate and Northwestern State Professor Dr. Julie Kane, who discussed the marriage of creativity with scholarly research.

Presentations represented “the spectrum of fine arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences,” said Dr. Margaret Cochran, Research Day faculty coordinator.

Dr. Andrew Crank received the Dr. Mildred Hart Bailey Research Award, which honors faculty whose research is related specifically to Louisiana. From left are Cochran, Gregory, Wernet and Abney.

Dr. Andrew Crank is the winner of the 2012 Dr. Mildred Hart Bailey Research Award. From left are Dr. Margaret Cochran, Research Day faculty coordinator; Crank, and Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs Dr. Lisa Abney.

Dr. Pete Gregory and Mary Linn Wernet are recipients of the first-ever Dr. Marietta LeBreton Award, which honors faculty whose research is related specifically to Louisiana. From left are Cochran, Gregory, Wernet and Abney.

Continued on page 2
Research Day...Continued from Page 1

New and past winners of the Dr. Mildred Hart Bailey Research Award are Dr. Lisa Abney, Dr. Andrew Crank, Dr. Mark Thompson, Matt DeFord, Dr. Julie Kane, Dr. Curt Phifer, Dr. Pete Gregory and Mary Linn Wernet.

recognizes outstanding research, distinguished artistic performance and/or creative work completed within the last three years. Evaluations are based on scholarly or creative significance, national, regional or local impact, originality and ingenuity of project design and critical recognition by experts in the field. Crank is an assistant professor of American literature and director of undergraduate studies in the Department of Language and Communication and book review editor for Southern Studies.

Dr. Karen McFerrin, professor of education technology, received the Dr. Jean D’Amato-Thomas Lifetime Achievement Award, an honor that recognizes a senior faculty member whose career has included a significant commitment to research and service to their disciplines. Nominees must have been significant contributions to their fields of study, remained dedicated to a consistent research agenda spanning their careers, including publications, presentations, research grants or other related activities, and have demonstrated a sustained record of service to the discipline.

The Northwestern State Research Committee initiated a new award this year, the Dr. Marietta LeBreton Award, which honors faculty whose research careers have been dedicated to research with a significant connection to Louisiana. Dr. Hiram “Pete” Gregory, professor of anthropology, and Mary Linn Wernet, head archivist and records officer, were the first recipients of this award.

Research Day also provided a forum for the unveiling of a portrait of V.L. Roy who served as president of the institution from 1911-1929.

Shayne Creppel painted the portrait last year on the 100th anniversary of Roy becoming president. Creppel is a graduate student in Student Personnel Services-Student Affairs Administration and a graduate assistant in Counseling and Career Services. The portrait will hang in Roy Hall.

Kane’s address, “Poets and Elephants: Creative Writing Meets Research” explained how creativity and scholarly research complement each other.

She offered a reading of two of her poems, “A Hobo’s
Kane closed by encouraging her audience to do good work, “whether your research is creative, scholarly or both.”

Saul Carcamo of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, and Christian Marks of Opelousas, two seniors at the Louisiana Scholars’ College with concentrations in scientific inquiry, were Student Research Award winners.

Several undergraduate students who participated in Northwestern State Research Day are scheduled to present their research at the University of Louisiana System Academic Summit to be held Thursday, April 19 on the campus of McNeese State University.

Northwestern State University will participate in the first annual University of Louisiana System Academic Summit to be held Thursday, April 19 and Friday, April 20 on the campus of McNeese State University.

This celebration of academic excellence at UL System universities will encompass both the previous system-wide service-learning conference, a student art exhibition and undergraduate research day.

Faculty, staff, and student leaders from the University of Louisiana System are encouraged to participate and attend.

“The three prongs of the Academic Summer that will be highlighted are art, service-learning and undergraduate research,” said Steve Gruesbeck, director of Service-Learning at Northwestern State. “There is a fourth component as well, that of professional development.”

Service-Learning Day, Undergraduate Research Day and a juried art competition will be held on April 19 and a faculty development session will be held on April 20.

A reception for the art competition will take place from 5-7 p.m. Thursday, April 19.

Featured sessions will include “Generational Crossroads: When X, Y & Boomers Collide!” by Eric Rowles, president and CEO of Leading to Change, and “The American Alligator: From Marsh to Medicine” by Dr. Mark Merchant, professor of biochemistry at McNeese State University.

The National Council of Undergraduate Research Faculty Workshop will be led by Dr. Katherine Whatley, provost of Berry College.

For more information, visit the University of Louisiana System website at ulsystem.net and type Academic Summit into the search function to access an overview of the program.
Northwestern State Libraries is accepting nominations for the 2012 Fleming A. Thomas Faculty Information Literacy Award. This award is granted to an NSULA or BPCC faculty member who works with librarians to create life-long learners.

If you would like to nominate someone for the award, please email the required documents to Gail Kwak (kwak@nsula.edu) no later than noon on Friday April 13.

Criteria, ranked by order of importance, is as follows.

• Coordinates with librarians to create assignments which will ensure a positive research experience for students
• Schedules information literacy sessions for students, and participates in the process of educating students in resources in their field
• Encourages students to work one-on-one with librarians to further their research
• Transforms students into life-long learners who have the information literacy skills to advance in their chosen field
• Serves as an example to students through use of library resources in their own research

Any NSU or BPCC@NSU faculty member or student may make a nomination. Nominees must be currently employed at the time of the nomination. Nominations must include a brief explanation of how the nominee meets each criterion and any other relevant information. Nominations must be submitted by a date after midterm the spring semester designated by the chair of the award committee.

People...Continued from Page 1

devoted to the cello music of Jacques Offenbach. For more information about this CD or any others in the series visit humanmetronome.com.

Randy Haley, associate professor, Department of Social Work and interim executive director of Northwestern State’s Leesville/Fort Polk campus, announces the completion of a book, Once Forgotten: Philip R. Haley’s Combat and Prisoner of War Experiences in the Far East, 1941-1945. The book was published by Createspace.com, a subsidiary of Amazon.com and is available at createspace.com/3811657

Ryan D. Hancock, assistant professor in Counseling, College of Education and Human Development, successfully defended his doctoral dissertation to earn the title Dr. Dr. Massimo D. Bezoari, professor of chemistry, was the senior author of a paper entitled “Teaching Undergraduates Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry Using POGIL-Based Laboratory Experiments, and Development of a Five-Day Workshop for Collaborative Community Colleges -- an NSF Supported Project” that was published in The Chemical Educator (The Chemical Educator Chem. Educator 2012, 17, 6–14).

Dr. Kimberly McAlister, department head and coordinator of assessment, Department of Teaching and Learning, College of Education and Human Development, has been appointed to the national NCATE (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) Board of Examiners. McAlister was one of a cohort of 56 National BOE members trained in Indianapolis last November.

“As a National BOE member, these individuals represent a distinctive group of professionals drawn from a pool of teacher educators, practitioners, policy makers, and subject matter specialists,” said Stephanie Kowal, assistant to the Vice President of Accreditation, NCATE. “Their work on accreditation reviews will have critical impact on ensuring the quality of educator preparation programs and the fidelity of NCATE’s national accreditation system.”

Dr. Kimberly McAlister

Dr. Margaret Cochran, professor of ecology and mathematics, and Jacqueline Mason, formerly in the College of Education, were coauthors.

The Chemical Educator is a peer-reviewed, international journal that is available on the world wide web. The paper detailed the activities and assessments of a National Science Foundation grant for $199,912 awarded to the authors and other collaborators in 2008.

Dr. Bezoari said that the paper...
Library staff represents Northwestern at meetings

Several representatives of NSU Libraries attended the Louisiana Library Association Conference in March at the Shreveport Convention Center.

**Michael Matthews**, head of Serials-Media, Interlibrary Loan and Academic Section chair, was on a panel discussion, “Time to Look Under the Hood: Is Academic Librarianship Under-Theorized.”

**Paula Craig**, head of Libraries for the College of Nursing and Allied Health in Shreveport, was a co-presenter for “A Day in the Life (Special Librarians).”


Also present were **Abbie Landry**, director of Libraries; **Elizabeth Graves**, head of Technical Processes; **Anna MacDonald**, manager of the Northwestern State Library at Leesville/Ft. Polk; **Jackie Hawkins**, Interlibrary Loan; **Terrie Sebren**, Serials Media, and **Sheila Thompson**, Cammie G. Henry Research Center.

University Archivist **Mary Linn Wernet** attended the St. Denis Chapter of the Daughters of American Revolution meeting Feb. 25 where she briefly spoke to the members about the CGHRCS Louisiana Statehood Bicentennial Exhibitions.

That evening, Wernet attended a Louisiana Statehood Bicentennial Celebration at the Dr. Martin Luther King Center in Natchitoches.

Wernet attended the annual spring banquet of the Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches on Feb. 27 and the following day attended the Natchitoches Genealogical and Historical Association sponsored presentation of Rolanda Teal’s work on “The Underground Railroad in Natchitoches and Central Louisiana.”

Wernet met with the LHA Archives Committee during the Louisiana Historical Association meeting March 1.

Wernet and **Sonny Carter** attended Bryon Price’s presentation entitled “Charles Goodnight: A Man for All Ages” held in the Fleming Thomas Reading Room of the Watson Library, second floor.

The Cammie G. Henry Research Center participated in the 54th Annual Caddo Conference held at Northwestern State on March 16-17 by creating a traveling exhibit of Native American artwork by highly respected and recognized artists Acee Blue Eagle, Solomon McComb and Steve Mopope. Most of the artwork was commissioned by Caroline Dormon during the early 1940s while she was writing several Southeastern Indian Stories. Wernet coordinated and mounted the display, while Carter provided high resolution images of the artwork and Shelia Thompson and Wernet curated the exhibit during conference.

Wernet attended the LSU Digitizing Louisiana Newspaper Project presentation at Natchitoches Parish Library on the evening of March 21. Wernet was a part of an advisory board composed of historians, educators, archivists, journalists and genealogists to select Louisiana newspaper titles for digitization.

By the end of 2013, a total of 82 newspaper titles from 35 parishes, comprising approximately 230,000 pages will be available on Chronicling America. For updates and more information, visit Digitizing Louisiana Newspaper Project [http://www.lib.lsu.edu/special/cc/dlnp/](http://www.lib.lsu.edu/special/cc/dlnp/) and Chronicling America [http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

Wernet recently was appointed to the Louisiana Archives and Manuscripts-Archival Training Committee. The Louisiana executive committee is charged with maintaining and providing opportunities for affordable archival training for staff and volunteers in historical repositories in Louisiana. The committee met on March 27 to discuss governance, memberships, policies and procedures.

On March 27, the CGHRCS hosted a meeting of the Natchitoches Genealogical and Historical Association.

During the meeting Mary Linn Wernet spoke to the members about research opportunities in the center. Both Wernet and Shelia Thompson toured members through the current exhibit “Natchitoches: Paths to Statehood.”

**People...Continued from Page 4**

was a significant contribution to the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) community, providing more than 130 pages of supplementary materials, in addition to the body of the paper, that detailed novel/adapted undergraduate GCMS experiments, and project assessment tools. He also noted that the journal is international, and exposes Northwestern State to educators and students throughout the world.
Northwestern State University Theatre and Dance will present a new ballet as part of this season’s theme “Life is a Journey.” Each production this season has focused on the struggles that characters face as they go through life.

Tickets are $15 and $12 for senior citizens and non-Northwestern State students. NSU and Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts are admitted free with a current student I.D.

Alice in Wonderland, a new ballet by Kirstin Riehl and Barry Stoneking, will tell the popular story through dance. Alice in Wonderland will be staged on April 20-21 at 7:30 p.m. and April 22 at 2 p.m. in the A.A. Fredericks Auditorium.

For more information on Northwestern Theatre and Dance’s 2011-12 season, call (318) 357-4483 or go to theatre.nsula.edu.
Northwestern State was well represented at the recent Louisiana Historical Association annual meeting in New Orleans March 1-4. Dr. Charles Pellegrin of the Criminal Justice, History and Social Sciences Department pulled together two sessions encompassing the use of Louisiana archives and manuscript collections for the 2012 Louisiana Historical Association annual meeting. In the session entitled “New and Under-Used Archival Sources for Historians,” which was chaired by Pellegrin, three Louisiana archivists discussed newer and under-utilized collections from the archives they serve. Included in the panel were Michelle Riggs from LSU-A, Keith Fontenot from St. Landry Parish Courthouse, Chris Brown from Centenary Collection and Mary Linn Wernet from the NSU Watson Library.

Wernet discussed five under-utilized collections held by the Cammie G. Henry Research Center. The collections discussed were the Fortson Family, James Henry Williams, Grundy Cooper and Aza James Cooper, Speedy O. Long and Bill Dodd. These collections total 345 cubic feet of space on the archival shelves. More importantly, the collections encompass DeSoto, Rapides and Natchitoches parishes, from the 1800s-1990s and are all deeply rooted in the historical, political and cultural heritage of Louisiana.

Dr. Pellegrin’s research project involves the career of Kent H. Courtney, a New Orleans-based radio host, publisher, and political organizer in the 1950s and 1960s. Dr. Pellegrin, originally from Larose, has been at Northwestern State since 2004 and teaches courses in U.S. Foreign Relations, U.S. Military History, History of Modern China and Modern Japan, and History of the New South.

He holds a B.A. in social studies education from Nicholls State University (1988), a M.A. in history from University of Louisiana – Lafayette (1990), and a Ph.D. in history from Mississippi State University (2005).


Dr. Pellegrin is also the incoming managing editor of Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South, and has recently been elected to a three-year term to the board of directors of the Louisiana Historical Association.
Second Level nursing students from Northwestern State University’s Cenla campus in Alexandria participated in the American Heart Association Central Louisiana Heart Walk on March 3. Faculty and students completed the three-mile walk, contributing to more than $56,000 raised by the Alexandria community. The Northwestern State team included, front row from left, Kari Ellison, Kim Holt, Kristen Shumate, Heather Maddox, Noel Cole, April Johnson, Assistant Professor Leah Pearce, Samantha Martin and Lauren Heaton and son. On the back row are Lindsay Lewis, Brittani York, Ashlee Tracey, Kayla Antee, Cody Edwards, Cammie Recer, Sarah Newhouse, Yani Dunkley and Gabrielle Jeansonne. Not shown are Yarkeshala Waldon, Donovan Glover and Krista Green.

**OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS**

**CONGRATULATIONS**

- **Dr. Shane Rasmussen**, LA Folklife Center, College of Arts, Letters, and Graduate Studies and Research, received notification of a $10,000 award from the National Endowment for the Arts for “2012 Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival.”

- **Dr. Julie Delabbio**, Aquaculture Research Center, College of Arts, Letters, Graduate Studies and Research, received notification of a $94,024 award from the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center for “Aquaculture Research Project: River Water Research.”

**CURRENT ACTIVITIES**

- **Ms. Kelli Haynes**, Department of Radiologic Sciences, College of Nursing and Allied Health, submitted a proposal to the American Society of Radiologic Technologists for “Attitudes of Radiologic Technologists Regarding Online Social Networking and E-professionalism.” **Dr. Laura Aaron** is collaborator.

- **Mr. Ryan Hancock**, Department of Educational Leadership and Technology, College of Education and Human Development, submitted a proposal to Rapides Foundation for “Impact of Small Group Counseling Interventions on Alcohol Abuse Prevention in College Students.”

- **Dr. Shane Rasmussen**, LA Folklife Center, College of Arts, Letters and Graduate Studies and Research, submitted a proposal to the National Endowment for the Arts for “2013 Natchitoches – NSU Folk Festival.”

**For more information regarding funding opportunities, visit ORSP’s website at [www.nsla.edu/orsp](http://www.nsla.edu/orsp).**
Company associates will visit Watson Library

Sixty employees of United Title Company of Louisiana Inc., a firm with branches in Bossier City, Shreveport, Alexandria and Lafayette, will visit the Cammie G. Henry Research Center on the campus of Northwestern State University Wednesday, May 2. The guests will view a current exhibition, “1812-2012 Louisiana Statehood Bicentennial Natchitoches: Paths to Statehood,” at the Center, housed on the third floor of Watson Library, during a tour stop on a company field trip, according to University Archivist Mary Linn Wernet.

“Typically, we have an annual customer appreciation function but decided this year to just do a company meeting as a thank you to all our associates. Given the location of our offices, the most convenient neutral territory that had a lot to offer was Natchitoches,” said Judith B. McGrew, division manager for United Title Company of Louisiana. McGrew and Wernet are former co-workers who worked at Caddo Abstract Company, the predecessor of United Title Company, in the 1970s before Wernet left to pursue a graduate degree in history with a concentration in archives. The two reconnected a few years ago and Wernet had the opportunity to share information about her work and projects as Northwestern State’s campus archivist.

“The exhibition begins with the Caddo Indians of the 1540s, introduces the French and Spanish into Natchitoches, touches on the Louisiana Purchase and highlights Natchitoches during the U.S. territorial period through statehood in 1812,” said Mary Linn Wernet, Northwestern State archivist.

After viewing the exhibition, the group will lunch at a local eatery before embarking on a guided tour of the Natchitoches Historic District. “Natchitoches: Paths to Statehood” will run through mid-June and may be viewed in the Cammie G. Henry Research Center on the third floor of Watson Memorial Library on the Northwestern State campus. Hours are 8 a.m. – noon and 1-5 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 8 a.m.-noon on Friday. Hours and staffing are subject to change; guests should call (318) 357-4585 or e-mail at wernet@nsula.edu before planning a visit.

From July through mid-December, the Cammie G. Henry Research Center will feature an exhibition celebrating Natchitoches up to 1850s. For more information on the Cammie G. Henry Research Center, visit library.nsula.edu/cammie-henry-research-center/.

Gruesbeck leads discussion at service conference

Northwestern State University’s Director of Service-Learning Steve Gruesbeck led a round table discussion on “Sustainability and Service-Learning in Higher Education” March 22 during the Gulf South Summit on Service-Learning in Hattiesburg, Miss. The Gulf South Summit is the premier service-learning conference in the region in which representatives from over a dozen southern states attend each year.

Gruesbeck’s invitation to participate in the panel is an extension of a poster presentation developed in partnership with Northwestern faculty Dr. Susan Thorson-Barnett and Dr. Margaret Cochran and City of Natchitoches personnel Lisa Cooley and Courtney Hornsby. The poster presentation, also scheduled for the Summit, is titled “Green Interdisciplinary Service and Service Learning.”

“At NSU, we’ve been pairing these two initiatives since the Office of Service-Learning was established,” Gruesbeck said. “Agencies such as Keep Louisiana Beautiful are eager to discover new ways of partnering with universities and colleges in order to engage young people.”

Gruesbeck is serving a two-year term on the board of directors of Keep Louisiana Beautiful, the state’s premier non-profit organization dedicated to litter prevention and waste reduction.

“April is Keep Louisiana Beautiful Month. For the last few years, each spring, Northwestern State and the City of Natchitoches have partnered together on campus and community clean-up projects. Northwestern State joined the city, the Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts and the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training to participate in the Cane River Waterway Patrol’s Cane River Lake Clean-up Day. Projects like this help keep institutions of higher education connected to their respective communities,” Gruesbeck said.
Anne’s Day celebrates life through acts of kindness

A family turned grief into a celebration of life by encouraging others to perform random acts of kindness in remembrance of their infant daughter. **Dr. Gerra Perkins**, associate professor in the College of Education and Human Development, and her husband Kendal initiated Anne’s Day, to be celebrated annually on March 5, in memory of their daughter, Anne Alexandra Perkins, who passed away Jan. 30, 2011. Anne’s Day began last year as a celebration of Anne’s life and the kindness shown to the Perkins family after her death.

Anne’s Day celebrates Anne’s birthday by encouraging people to offer an act of kindness to someone else.

Perkins said kindness has no single definition and the size of the act is less important than the act itself.

Dr. Perkins’ parents are also members of the Northwestern State faculty. They are College of Education and Human Development Assistant Professors **Dr. Nelda** and **Dr. Wendell Wellman**.

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Sympathy

Ramon Triche, husband of **Claudia Triche**, department head of Social Work, passed away Wednesday, Jan. 29. A funeral mass will be held on Friday, March 2 at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the NSU Foundation. A plant was sent to services from the NSU Floral Fund.

Sidney Cox, the father of **Jarrod Cox**, Recreation Complex, passed away Sunday March 11. Memorial Services were held Tuesday, March 13, at the chapel of Hixon Brothers, Alexandria. The NSU Floral Fund made a donation to St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in memory of Mr. Cox.

Ollie County, mother of **Lois Banks**, New Bureau, passed away Tuesday, March 13. A plant was sent to services from the NSU Floral Fund.

The floral fund also sent a plant to services for Bob Lumpkins, retired from the College of Education.

John Gray, father of **Melinda Gray Parrie** and father-in-law of **Joe Parrie**, passed away on Tuesday, March 27. Services were held Saturday, March 31 in Lafayette.

If you would like to contribute to the Floral Fund which is used to send flowers or a memorial for our Northwestern family at a time of loss and grief, contact Pam Hetherwick in the Office of University Affairs by May 11. Faculty and staff can arrange for an annual deduction of $5 to be withheld form their paychecks for the Floral Fund.

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Aquaculture Research Center selling crawfish

Northwestern State University’s Aquaculture Research Center is selling live crawfish harvested from the Center’s crawfish ponds in Lena every week though late May. Crawfish are delivered from the Center to Northwestern State’s main campus at 10 a.m. Fridays and are available for pickup in the parking lot of St. Denis Hall. The price per pound is established every Monday.

“We are particularly proud of our crawfish because they are the successful result of our research on increasing production in crawfish ponds,” said **Dr. Julie Delabbio**, director of the Aquaculture Research Center. Delabbio said she can take order as small as five pounds.

“The crawfish are in sacks so we recommend those who purchase bring a cooler for transport, particularly on warm days,” Delabbio said.

“Calling early in the week is important because we are usually sold out by Thursday afternoons.”

For more information or to place an order, call Delabbio at (318) 663-0382 or e-mail delabbioj@nsula.edu
Get Moving at the WRAC

Group Exercise Schedule - Spring 2012

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<td>High Voltage Circuit</td>
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<td>Pilates</td>
<td>Step &amp; Tone</td>
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<td>Cardio Fit</td>
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Classes are subject to change. Classes with low participation may be removed from the schedule.

Visit wrac.nsula.edu for more information.

Intro to Fibers class seeks donations of yarn, craft supply

Assistant Professor of Art Leslie Gruesbeck is seeking donations of yarn and other knitting scraps that crafters may want to discard. Gruesbeck and students in her Intro to Fibers class will utilize the donations.

“We are creating a repository for yarn or crochet pieces that crafters have started and won’t finish that can be used in future projects” Gruesbeck said.

Donors can drop off items in a designated receptacle on the first floor of the Creative and Performing Arts Building near the door to the Hanchey Art Gallery.

Gruesbeck and students joined the international yarn bomb phenomenon by draping the crape myrtle trees near the natatorium with colorful handknit scarves.

Yarn bombs attempt to add warmth to and personalize public spaces while raising interest in handcrafts. Knitters are considered artists rather than vandals because the installations are impermanent and do not deface property or buildings.

Encouraged by positive response, Gruesbeck and students are planning future yarn bombs.
Dr. Paula Furr and son promote Asperger’s awareness

A Northwestern State University administrator and her son, a Northwestern State student, are presenting information to public schools and other audiences to increase awareness of Asperger’s Syndrome. The two hope their testimony will help educators understand how to educate youngsters coping with AS in a positive and caring environment.

“Having a child diagnosed on the autism spectrum can be gut-wrenching,” said Dr. Paula Furr, professor and head of the Department of Education Leadership and Technology in Northwestern State’s College of Education and Human Development.

“I can’t understate the worry and fears and challenges. I can, however, say that no parent can do this alone. You need family support, therapeutic support, school support, and spiritual or other personal support. You must learn to advocate for your child and hope that one day the child, depending upon level of severity, will be able to be his or her own advocate and recognize that the ability in disability is what defines him or her.”

Dr. Furr and her son Taylor Furr, 22, spoke to the Washington Parish School System’s Autism Team recently to share the perspectives of a parent and a student and lessons learned from personal experience.

Their presentation, “Taylor’s Tips,” offers ways to help students be successful in school and elsewhere. The two will speak at a state conference on autism in New Orleans this September. Dr. Furr hopes to educate others about exceptionalities and encourage teachers to act with compassion and understanding.

“Great teachers not only know about individual differences, differentiated instruction, universal design and so on, they believe in and practice effective teaching strategies for all children,” Dr. Furr said. “Patience and forgiveness are required. These children can anger and enchant you, sometimes within moments. They can sense quickly whether you like them or not. Your influence often determines whether the child succeeds not just in your class but in their overall school and life success. I cannot thank those teachers enough who believed in my child and to whom he and we owe all.”

Asperger’s Syndrome is an autism spectrum disorder that is milder than autism, but shares many of its characteristics. A major characteristic of children with AS is an obsessive interest in a single subject that can lead to the child becoming an expert on a variety of topics. The national prevalence rate of Asperger’s/Autism diagnoses is currently one out of every 110 and is four times more likely to occur in boys than girls.

Individuals with Asperger’s often have trouble reading social cues and recognizing other people’s feelings. They may have strange movements and mannerisms that when combined with other effects make it difficult for them to make friends. Their treatment focuses on three main symptoms: poor communication skills, obsessive or repetitive routines and physical clumsi-
Taylor Furr was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome (AS) as a third grader. During middle school, he focused on developing academic strengths and social skills with the help of understanding teachers, but high school was challenging and he coped with feelings of isolation and heightened awareness of his exceptionalities.

After graduating from Alexandria Senior High, Furr completed the TOPS curriculum and enrolled in Northwestern State through the Summer Bridge program that helps students transition from high school to college. He is pursuing a degree in general studies with a concentration in mass communications. He is the public service announcement/public relations director at Northwestern State’s campus radio station, KNWD, and hosts a radio show, “Gamer Tracks.”

“I’d say that my area of expertise would be digital media; mainly editing video and audio. I’m also handy with using Windows 7, basic system care, and I’m a fast learner with new software. I’ve also been experimenting with 3D animation and customization of computer hardware,” he said.

Taylor Furr said there is more understanding about Asperger’s in the university setting and his mother agreed that several professors have made a positive impact with their assistance and encouragement.

At Northwestern State, students like Taylor can tap resources available through the university’s Office of Disability Support, which coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities.

“We provide additional time on exams, free tutoring and help with study skills and time management,” said Catherine Faucheaux, ODS director. “We do anything we can to help the student become successful in both academic and non-academic settings.”

“Students with Asperger’s Syndrome have islands of intelligence,” said Dr. Furr, “but can remain isolated on their islands without early intervention and continued support.” Dr. Furr recognizes the positives of Asperger’s, but she realizes that it must be diagnosed and treated properly.

According to Dr. Barbara Duchardt, professor of special education in Northwestern State’s College of Education and Human Development, early diagnosis and intervention are keys to supporting a child with Asperger’s Syndrome and parents can request a free evaluation through their school or parish. The evaluation is required by law through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Teachers and families of children with Asperger’s syndrome should learn as much as possible about Asperger’s and seek support from school personnel, counselors and speech and occupational therapists, as well as parish coordinators of special education, diagnosticians and regional or community services, such a Families Helping Families, Duchardt said.

“Create an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Program (IEP) with the team and be respectful of each other’s concerns,” Duchardt said.

“Communication and collaboration are important in the creative problem-solving and decision-making process.

“We were fortunate to have Dr. Duchardt’s expertise, guidance and concern during Taylor’s K-12 and now college experience,” Dr. Furr said. “I wish all teachers had the opportunity or sought to take special education courses at Northwestern State as in all classrooms such knowledge is crucial to help all students learn.”

Northwestern State offers on-line add-on certifications, Master’s and Specialists degrees in special education including early intervention, mild/moderate for elementary, middle and high school, and educational diagnostian, as well as gifted education.

For more information on Tyler’s Tips, contact Dr. Furr at furr@nsula.edu. For information on Northwestern State’s special education programs in gifted education, contact Dr. Paula Christensen at (318) 357-5154 or e-mail christensen@nsula.edu. To contact Families Helping Families, Regions 6 and 7, call (318) 357-5524 or e-mail info@ffregion7.com.