HOT on the Trail of the EVIDENCE

Also:
Tourism — A Devil’s Bargain?

Plus:
Astronomical Expectations

UNLV alumna Maria Thomas
Enthusiastic Rebel Ring Phonathon students will contact you soon. . . . We're counting on you to help enhance academic programs and scholarships. So when they call, please give generously — your participation will make a difference for today's students. We look forward to talking with you!

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Astronomical Expectations
UNLV student Vanessa Harvey discovered more than her love of astronomy when she searched for the right major and career path.
BY SUZAN DIBELLA

Tourism – A Devil’s Bargain?
Tourism can produce unforeseen and irreversible effects in some towns, according to UNLV history professor Hal Rothman. In his latest book, he explores how embracing tourism can trigger “an all-encompassing contest for the soul of a place.”
BY BARBARA CLOUD

Hot on the Trail of the Evidence
Crime scene analyst Maria Thomas meticulously collects and preserves evidence of deeds ranging from burglary to murder. Her work is challenging and often emotionally draining, but the UNLV alumna finds it very rewarding.
BY LAURIE FRUTH

A Talent for Teaching Teachers
Special education professor Jeff Gelser uses his research and enthusiasm for education to encourage his UNLV students to get the most out of teaching young children.
A Commitment to Excellence
The founding dean of the William S. Boyd School of Law outlines several themes that will guide the ongoing development of UNLV’s newest school.
Construction Underway on $51 Million Lied Library

Construction is underway on the $51 million state-of-the-art Lied Library on the UNLV campus.

The new five-floor, 300,000-square-foot facility is scheduled to open in January 2000. Capable of housing 1.8 million volumes, the new library will be located north of the Classroom Building Complex and west of the Harry Reid Center for Environmental Studies and the Marjorie Barrick Museum of Natural History.

A $15 million gift from the Lied Foundation Trust and the Nevada Legislature, the library will be used in the academic, scholarly, and community service endeavors. The Lied Library will be used as a catalyst for the building.

Weiller Named Outstanding Faculty Member

David Weiller, assistant professor of music, has been selected by the UNLV Alumni Association as the recipient of the group's Outstanding Faculty Member of the Year Award for 1998.

Weiller, UNLV's director of choral studies, has taught at UNLV for 15 years. He directs the University Singers, the UNLV Chamber Chorale, and the Varsity Men's Glee Club.

"I'm very honored to receive the award," he said. "I'm honored that my college would nominate me and that the Alumni Association would recognize the work that I do on campus and in the community." Weiller said one of the unanticipated benefits of receiving the award was learning how he is viewed by his students.

Several of my former students wrote letters on my behalf about the impact I have had on their careers. That was really a very moving experience," he said. Weiller, who holds a master's degree in music from the University of Illinois, was honored by the Alumni Association at a luncheon reception last spring. He is the 25th recipient of the award.

Two to Receive 1998 Distinguished Professor Award

UNLV has selected two professors to receive the Distinguished Professor Award this year. In the past, only one has been named each year.

This year's recipients are foreign language professor Catherine Bellver and English professor Joseph McCullough.

"We are extremely pleased to have two outstanding recipients of this prestigious award this year," said UNLV President Carol C. Harter. "Both of the award recipients have maintained such distinguished records of scholarship, teaching, and service throughout their tenure at UNLV that they are certainly deserving of our highest faculty honor."

Bellver, who joined UNLV's department of foreign languages in 1972, teaches a variety of Spanish classes, including upper-division and graduate-level Spanish language and literature courses. A prolific writer, Bellver has authored nearly 40 journal articles, more than 80 reviews, and seven book chapters, as well as two critical monographs on Spanish pedagogy in 1988 and 1989.

He served as department chair for two years and has served on more than 50 university committees during her tenure at UNLV. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and a master's degree and doctorate from Ohio State University.

McCullough, who specializes in 19th century American literature and American humor, joined the English department in 1969.

An internationally recognized expert on Mark Twain, McCullough has authored seven books and more than 20 journal articles, mostly on Twain or author Hamlin Garland.

He has appeared on television as a featured expert on Twain and is currently conducting research on Twain's maxim. McCullough was named Barrick Distinguished Scholar in 1996-97. He also has been named outstanding faculty member by the UCCSN Board of Regents, and he received the UNLV Alumni Distinguished Faculty Member of the Year Award in 1993. As a two-time recipient of the Fulbright scholarship, McCullough lectured in Helsinki, Finland, and later in Athens, Greece. He served as chair of the English department from 1993 to 1997.

He received his bachelor's degree from Gonzaga University and his master's degree and doctorate from Ohio State University.

KUNV Becomes NPR Affiliate

KUNV 91.5-FM, UNLV's campus radio station, has become an affiliate of National Public Radio, enabling the station to broadcast some of the top jazz radio shows in the country.

"For many years Las Vegas has been served by one NPR affiliate," program director Brian Sanders said. "But there are so many programs available through National Public Radio that no single station can run them all. Bringing this affiliation to KUNV is a great stride forward for Southern Nevada."

KUNV also recently added satellite downlink capability, which will enable the station to present NPR news, cultural programs, and other specials in addition to music in the near future, Sanders said.

Noting that in the past the university has "come to a new understanding of the value of having its own radio station," Sanders said, "it's great for UNLV to be associated with one of the premier radio services in the country."

The station is now presenting new NPR jazz shows Monday through Friday in the 5-6 p.m. time slot. They include Billy Taylor's Jazz at Kennedy Center, Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz, Jazz Profiles, Jazzer with Norma Winstone, and Wynton Marsalis: Making the Music.
New Facilities for UNLV’s Client Services Center Open

New facilities for UNLV’s Client Services Center recently opened on campus.

The new state-of-the-art facility for students in the departments of counseling and psychology is located on the second floor of the Paul McDermott Physical Education Complex. At the center, graduate students in UNLV’s counseling and psychology programs provide high-quality, low-cost, client-focused counseling services to the public, according to center director Tom Sexton.

The building is named for William Bennett, owner of the Sahara Hotel and Casino, who donated $2.2 million to the university to build the professional development building and provide video links to the elementary school building. The Bennett Professional Development Building will enable UNLV and the Clark County School District to better serve the at-risk students who attend Paradise Elementary School, a professional practice school recently relocated to the university campus. The Bennett building also will enhance teacher education programs in UNLV’s College of Education.

It will contain state-of-the-art computer and audiovisual equipment; a control room for the high-tech equipment; a seminar room; and computer lab, classroom, and office space.

William Bennett Building Ground Breaking Ceremony Held

UNLV broke ground recently for the William G. Bennett Professional Development Building, an 8,000-square-foot facility that will be adjacent to the new Paradise Elementary School on the university campus.

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Two Longtime Members of University Faculty Die

A Dictionary for the West—director by UNLV theatre professor Bob Burgan, was chosen to go to the Kennedy Center. In 1975, she play UNLV took to the festival was The House of Bernarda Alba.

Although the festival is not a competition, productions are adjudicated at several levels before the four finalists are selected. Two UNLV productions—Falsettos and The Father—were chosen to be performed at the regional festival in February.

Following those performances, Falsettos, which was directed by UNLV theatre professor Bob Burgan, was chosen to go to the final level of the festival in Washington, D.C. Additionally, UNLV students Toddl Hornman and Jim Ballard, the two principal actors in Falsettos, were honored for their performance excellence following their appearance at the regional festival.

Jim Ratigan, the former first vice president of the UNLV Alumni Association, has been elected president of the association. He will serve a two-year term.

Ratigan, who received a bachelor’s degree in business administration in 1978, has been a member of the association’s board of directors for the past seven years, most recently serving as first vice president.

Over the years Ratigan has been instrumental in securing several major donations for the university, according to Carl Cook, assistant director of alumni relations.

Additionally, he has represented the association on several important search committees for new university employees. For the past four years, he has arranged the annual retreat for the association’s board of directors.

“One of my goals as president is to increase the exposure of the Alumni Association in the community and within the university,” said Ratigan, who is the general managing partner of RCR Associates, a computer network consulting firm.

“I want the association to be recognized as the positive, proactive force for helping students that it is,” he said.

Cook said Ratigan’s character and success in the business world “brings to the leadership of the Alumni Association everything we could ask for.”
HEN U.S. SEN. HARRY REID recently asked physics major Vanessa Harvey how she became interested in science, he couldn't possibly have known just how long—or how engaging—her answer might have been.

Harvey, a UNLV senior studying astronomy, met Reid and the other members of Nevada's congressional delegation when she attended a conference in Washington, D.C., to present information about her research on galaxies. She was one of 100 students from 38 states selected to participate in the conference—called a "poster session"—held on Capitol Hill; members of Congress were invited to attend the session to look over the students' informational displays and ask questions.

"All of them asked great questions," says the modest, soft-spoken Harvey, who was clearly excited about her opportunity to talk with the congressmen about her research. But it was Reid's inquiry about the origins of her interest in science that remained in her mind after the event.

"When they met, time constraints prevented her from offering him anything more than the abbreviated version of her story, but she laughingly acknowledges that she could have "gone on for a couple of hours" in response to his question.

After all, Harvey has thought a great deal about her search for the right academic path and how that search led her to pursue a second bachelor's degree. She took a slightly circuitous route, she notes, but one that has provided her with insights on the importance of undergraduate research, the contribution of African-American women in society, the disconcerting effects of self-limitation, and the value of encouragement. By anyone's standard, it would've been tough to fit all of that into a Washington minute.

Harvey began her quest for the right path in the small town of Waterbury, Conn., where she was born and raised. She found herself drawn at an early age to the performing arts. By 14, she was enrolled in dance classes and began dabbling in community theater; by her senior year in high school, she was narrowing her choices.

"At the time, I was exploring different things. I thought I would study dance in college, but I had also taken physics in high school. And my physics teacher was very encouraging; he had a daughter who was in dance also, so he knew how much I enjoyed it," says Harvey, now 25.

"But he also said that if I chose to go into physics, a lot of doors would open to me."

That thought remained in the back of her mind as she enrolled in a private college in Connecticut with the intention of studying modern dance. Along with her dance classes, she took the usual required courses. One of her science course options was astronomy.

"I had never had astronomy before," Harvey recalls. "I enjoyed it very much. It was my first chance to learn about celestial objects and to handle a real telescope. Prior to that, astronomy was an abstract concept. Then, there I was each week, out in the cold night air observing these objects myself. It was wonderful."

But she was still a freshman and hadn't yet decided which major to choose. She had intended to major in dance, but she was beginning to feel ambivalent about her dance program. "I guess encouragement does matter in where you go in life," she says. "I wasn't getting a lot of encouragement in the dance program there, probably in part because I was an intermediate student. Being intermediate at something is very difficult. In any case, I found that maybe I was just beating my head against the wall for nothing.... I guess I discovered that my commitment just wasn't there."

Then, when one of her dance instructors suggested that any dancer should have a backup career plan, Harvey's mind was made up: She would minor in dance and look for a different
academic major and career path. She had enjoyed astronomy so much in her freshman year that it became her next choice. But other factors about the program troubled her.

"I didn't see any women or any black women in physics, so I thought maybe it wasn't where I should be. I had come from a co-ed high school where there were always women in my science and math classes. When I found that I was the only woman in my freshman astronomy class, my response was, 'Oh, my goodness. What is this all about?"

"I talked to my professor about it. I guess he thought that if you wanted to study physics, you just came to class. He wasn't very inspirational. His response was basically, 'So what? So I decided maybe it wasn't the place for me.'"

At that point, Harvey decided to design her own degree — one that would enable her to explore some issues of personal significance.

"What I did was design an interdisciplinary degree involving American history, American literature, and women's studies. I wanted to study American women thought of their own math classes.

"It wasn't very inspirational. His response wasn't about physics, so I thought maybe it would enable her to explore some issues of personal significance.

"I wanted to get a sense of what else was out there in science just to make sure I would be sitting here. I was using text written by black women to re-examine every issue. Also, I wanted to present information on her research.

"I realized that even though I was the only black woman sitting in that astronomy class, I could hold my own because I say so — and because all of the black women I've read about are part of our study. Weisskopf, Artie, in the spring of her first year at UNLV. "Loved it!" Harvey exclaims, explaining that she helped him continue some of his research. "I talk to Dr. Farley [UNLV physics professor John Farley] about my situation, and he offered me a job in his lab as a research assistant in laser spectroscopy. Harvey says, 'It was great because it gave me the opportunity to explore other areas of science. Also, I wanted to get a sense of what else was out there in science just to make sure I wasn't narrowing my choices too soon.'"

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Tourism built Las Vegas and made it thrive. But not all towns enjoy the same unqualified success with the industry — and some even suffer unforeseen and irreversible consequences from it, according to UNLV history professor Hal Rothman. In his latest book, Rothman explores how embracing tourism can trigger “an all-encompassing contest for the soul of a place.”

BY BARBARA CLOUD

Questioning the Value of Tourism Might Seem a Bit Risky in a town like Las Vegas. It’s a little like doubting the merit of the mining industry at Sutter’s Mill during the Gold Rush: You might want to think twice before expressing your opinion too loudly.

But UNLV history professor Hal Rothman isn’t looking over his shoulder much. He’s not even being quiet about his belief — which his latest research demonstrates — that tourism can bring both promise and peril to a community.

“I don’t believe you write history just for your fellow scholars,” he says. “I think you write it for people so the y will know and understand and care about the issues affecting their lives.”

And so he continues to espouse his belief that tourism is a strategy that many towns adopt without understanding that its costs can be as great as its benefits.

His views are perhaps best summarized by the title of his latest book, Devil’s Bargains: Tourism in the 20th Century American West. In it, he takes a critical look at the industry that has transformed so many towns throughout the West.

“The embrace of tourism triggers an all-encompassing contest for the soul of a place,” Rothman writes, adding that tourism promises much but delivers much less than expected. In the process, he adds, it brings “unanticipated and irreversible consequences” to a community.

He says that in scrambling for tourist dollars, a community loses sight of what made it a community in the first place. Like the actor who becomes his character off stage as well as on, a community takes on whatever characteristics it thinks will attract tourists. Residents buy into an artificial identity, losing their integrity in the process.

To illustrate his point, he refers to the town he considers the quintessential example of “a devil’s bargain” at work. (No, it’s not Las Vegas, he’s quick to note.) It’s Santa Fe, N.M., a town where, he asserts, he’s not exactly a celebrated figure. Rothman, who lived in Santa Fe for a time, knows the city well.

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It’s Santa Fe, N.M., a town where, he asserts, he’s not exactly a celebrated figure. Rothman, who lived in Santa Fe for a time, knows the city well. And the city knows him. When he cited that particular town as an example of how tourism can go wrong — in a presentation in Santa Fe — his friends there were outraged.

“I was lucky they didn’t tar and feather me,” he says.

Known for its hacienda and pueblo culture and its thriving art community, Santa Fe is, to Rothman, “pretentious” and “fraudulent” for presenting a romanticized image of Hispanic and Indian cultures.

Rothman chose Stephen Morath’s painting, Where the Wild West Went, for the cover of his book on tourism. He asserts that the Santa Fe we know today is not a “real” historic place, but the creation of Anglos at the turn of the century who wanted to attract tourists. The Anglos recognized that visitors preferred experiences that were easy to understand, and so they emphasized stereotypes that now even residents have come to accept as reality.

Santa Fe’s commitment to the created image results not only in an identity that Rothman calls fraudulent, but also one that is fixed and inflexible in the face of change.

By contrast, Rothman asserts, communities with less defined identities are more adaptable to the challenges of tourism than those who have carved their identities in stone.

He cites the city of Wilmington, N.C., as an example of a town that has managed tourism in a positive and flexible way.

An old railroad and timber town on the Atlantic coast, Wilmington has few characteristics of the antebellum South on which many communities in the region base their tourism industries. This allowed Wilmington to capitalize on the success of favorite son basketball star Michael Jordan. Thus, the museum for the U.S.S. North Carolina, docked at Wilmington, now has a Michael Jordan room, and there’s a Michael Jordan museum for the U.S.S. North Carolina, docked at Wilmington, now has a Michael Jordan room, and there’s a Michael Jordan museum.
highway — both tourist attractions that would be incongruous in the plantation- and-wisteria atmosphere of other Southern towns.

Another community that has understood the impact of tourism and has fairly successfully resisted its ill effects, according to Rothman, is Steamboat Springs, Colo.

"It's been bought out by corporations, it's always been the town that skied, not a ski town, precisely because people there have a long history of skiing as a community activity. They have rituals that go back to the turn of the century that are put on not for visitors but for the people of Steamboat Springs.

"They resent being turned into a ski town so they have fought it — successfully. It's unusual to resist 'progress' in that way.

So, Rothman notes — as if answering his critics — not all tourism turns out poorly for residents of a town. But, he adds, much of it does.

For those interested in how Rothman got on this soap box, he has a tale to take a look at the whole picture.

To begin with, he's not afraid to speak his mind. "No one would ever accuse me of being a Wallflower," he says. Indeed. Rothman concedes that his in-your-face style of delivering pertinent contemporary history lessons may have lost him a few friends in the tourism industry. But his style and message have made him extremely popular on the keynote speaker circuit, as well as with the media. He has turned up on speakers' platforms in towns from Laramie to Athens and has been quoted in The New York Times and Swarth magazine. He was also a prominently featured expert on the Arts and Entertainment Network's four-hour documentary on Las Vegas.

Rothman has also amassed an impressive scholarly record with numerous articles and nine books to his credit. He serves as editor of the journal Environmental History and made full professor before he was 40.

Although his aggressiveness seems to have gotten him into a spot of hot water now and then — particularly in certain towns — it appears to have yielded him both substantial respect in his discipline and a degree of national renown.

His life in academia started early. He calls himself a "university brat"; his father, a mathematician, and mother, a political scientist, both taught at the University of Illinois. He credits his upbringing with his understanding of the university milieu.

His interest in tourism is a natural extension of his background as an environmental historian. He got his start in that field when he attended the University of Texas, Austin, to do graduate work in America's history. He took a class on the spread of diseases in animals that particularly intrigued him.

The class dealt not so much with microbes as with their human carriers and the conditions people created in which disease could thrive. After learning about the devastating effect European migrations to North America had on the health of native cultures, he was fascinated: "I was sitting there thinking, 'Gee, I was never all that good at science, but this is pretty cool stuff.'"

His first environmental research dealt with various toxic substances, such as PCBs. Then he spent a summer camping and traveling throughout the West. He discovered that while camping sites in the national parks were nearly impossible to find, national monuments had plenty of space. He became curious about the relatively unknown and unvisited national monuments; they eventually became the subject of his dissertation, which in turn led to his first book, Preserving Diffrent Pasts: The American National Monuments.

Rothman graduated with a Ph.D. into a lean employment market for academic historians, so for a couple of years he worked as a contract historian, specializing in the history of the West. First, he compiled histories of national parks for the National Park Service. Later, he worked for a historical consulting company based in Spokane, Wash., where he wrote company and institutional histories, often marking anniversaries. He eventually expanded his National Park Service history of the Bandelier National Monument, near Los Alamos, N.M., into his second book, On Rims and Ridges: The Los Alamos Area Since 1880.

After his interlude writing park and corporate histories, Rothman landed a faculty position at Wichita State University, where he taught courses on making history accessible to the public. He came to Las Vegas in 1992 to help UNLV build a Ph.D. program in Western history and has been observing the impact of tourism ever since. After all, what better place than Las Vegas to study tourism?

To the surprise of many, Rothman is not especially critical of tourism in Las Vegas. The key to its success here, he says, is that the city isn't struggling with an identity crisis.

"Some cities lose their identity to tourism," he says. "They turn to tourism when they have no other choice or when other strategies fail. Not all of them can perform the slight of hand that we do so well here in Las Vegas. Tourism is a template; it works well here because it is the basis for our identity, our very existence."

Almost from the start, he notes, Las Vegas was a city designed to cater to tourists' desires. Like a virtual reality headset, the city can create almost any kind of ambience or identity. And when one image wears thin, an implosion followed by a few months of construction can rectify the situation.

"You hold up a mirror to tourists and we ask them, 'What do you want to be?' Then we say, 'You pay us, and you can be that.' That malleability is what makes us special," Rothman says. It also puts Las Vegas "in a better position to roll with the changes of the future than any other tourist place, certainly in North America."

This does not mean, however, that tourism's effect on Las Vegas is entirely benign, Rothman says. Las Vegas locals are not oblivious to the impact tourism has had on everything from freeways accessible to the public. He came to Las Vegas in 1992 to help UNLV build a Ph.D. program in Western history and has been observing the impact of tourism ever since.

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"It's not that tourism is incompatible with a better environment," he observes. "It's just that its presence is such that it takes the form of spots on a card or cherries on a slot machine. They are our form of authenticity, he speculates.

"People came to Las Vegas and visitors can stroll down an imitation Roman street, watch an artificial volcano blow, see that, for example, in Santa Fe. So what the women who look like cowboys are doing is looking at guys who may be pretending to be cowboys — which would be very typical of the tourism experience."

"The interesting thing was that we make the assumption that these guys are real cowboys. For all we know, they could be dressed up as cowboys. So what the women who look like tourists are doing is looking at guys who may be pretending to be cowboys — which is the basis for our identity, our very existence."

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"Some people in Park City are going to find things that negatively impact them, but the real estate developers are going to do very well.

Yet, he uses the "devil's bargain" metaphor in his book because he believes there is indeed potential for redemption. "Redemption lies in understanding what is going on," he says. And what is going on, Rothman asserts, is that when tourism comes to town, some bad comes with the good.

"It brings money. It brings opportunity. But it brings them for a certain segment of the population — landowners, real estate agents, bankers, other people involved with capital — and it does so at the expense of other segments of the community."

And although he agrees that the arrival of any new industry can place demands on community infrastructure that hurt some parts of society, he insists that the influence of tourism is unique. With an extractive industry, for example, when you sell all of whatever is in the ground, then people leave you alone," he observes. "When you put your yard on the market, you do with tourism, your identity ceases to be yours, and you become what the tourists want."

Also, the new, contrived identity generally contains elements of fabrication, he adds.

"The interesting thing was that we make the assumption that these guys are real cowboys. For all we know, they could be dressed up as cowboys. So what the women who look like tourists are doing is looking at guys who may be pretending to be cowboys — which would be very typical of the tourism experience."

This may seem to be an ironic objection coming from someone who lives in a city where fakery and visions can stroll down an imitation Roman street, watch an artificial volcano blow, and eat New York-style bagels over a fake mahogany cover emitting steam. But in Las Vegas, Rothman notes, no one expects authenticity, unless it takes the form of spots on a card or cherries on the slot machines. Or perhaps fabrication is our form of authenticity, he speculates.

But at least we know who we are, he says. And from a guy like Hal Rothman, that's a compliment. Just ask his friends in Santa Fe.
HOT on the Trail of the Evidence

A typical week on the job for Maria Thomas involves visiting some 200 crime scenes, where she meticulously collects and preserves the evidence of deeds ranging from routine burglaries to grisly murders. Her work is demanding and often emotionally draining, but the UNLV alumna finds it very rewarding.

BY LAURIE FRUTH

YOU'VE SEEN IT A THOUSAND times at the movies: A murder has been committed. Uniformed police officers set up barricades to protect the scene from a rapidly growing crowd of curious onlookers. The gruff but handsome police detective arrives, his face illuminated by flashing red lights. He casually slips under the strip of yellow police tape and approaches the body. He stoops and lifts a corner of the blood-stained sheet covering the body to look at the victim— and to look for the first of several clues that will lead him, within the allotted two hours of screen time, to the killer.

Of course, it's all fairly cut and dried in the movies. The detective, usually the star of the show, doesn't spend much time at the scene of the crime; he's back on the streets in minutes to solve the case.

But in real life, much of the case revolves around the crime scene, the often-complex set of details found there, and the team of law enforcement professionals who must meticulously sort through those details to help build a case.

UNLV alumna Maria Thomas is one of those professionals. She is a crime scene analyst with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department.

"I've always been fascinated by deviance, by what makes people commit crimes," says the
Thomas began her career in law enforcement in Metro's records department. She was a single mother raising three children and working full-time when she decided to begin attending UNLV classes in the evening.

"I enjoyed my work in records, but I wanted something more," Thomas says. "So after I graduated, I started looking around. I considered becoming an abuse and neglect specialist. Then I saw the crime scene analyst position posted, and I knew right away that this was the door I needed to walk through."

Thomas walked through that door and today is one of 33 crime scene analysts, or CSAs, as they are called, who work in the field service division of Metro's criminalistics bureau. They are not police officers but specialists trained to collect the trail of evidence left behind by criminals.

Their work is rigorous, exacting and, in some cases, emotionally draining.

"People often ask, 'How can you do this kind of work?' And it's true, we do see things that most people would cringe at," Thomas says, referring to scenes resulting from acts of violence. "But I can't help the victim if I allow myself to become too emotional. Time is precious in this job."

Time is indeed precious in this job. Thomas explains: "Every time we arrive at a scene, we have to treat it as if it were a live event. The crime scene analysts average approximately 200 cases each week. While the caseload is manageable, the work is far from routine."

"A lot of people believe that crime is predictable. And it may be predictable in the sense that we do respond to many property crimes. But there's usually some variation. Sometimes it's a hot burglar, meaning that the suspect is still inside when the victim arrives home. Or in crimes against individuals, some violence a gun was used, sometimes a knife. That's the challenge — trying to piece together a series of events from the physical evidence left at the scene of a crime."

Although each case is different, they all begin for Thomas with a call from the police dispatcher directing her to a given crime scene. If police officers or detectives are still there when she arrives, she asks them for details about the crime. Then she begins the laborious process of documenting, collecting, and preserving the physical evidence.

Next, the scene is assessed and systematically photographed from every relevant vantage point. If the crime is a homicide or an officer-involved shooting, one of her tasks is to sketch a comprehensive diagram of the scene showing the position of the body and weapon, if it's present. If appropriate, a search for trace evidence — hairs, fibers, semen, and blood — comes next.

Thomas is quick to point out that CSAs do not perform DNA testing, fingerprint typing, ballistics analysis, or latent (invisible) fingerprint analysis; that work is performed by other specialists in Metro's crime labs. CSAs do, however, collect the samples on which such analyses are conducted.

The collection process might involve cutting out a piece of carpet, lifting a carpet, or taking fingerprints from a window sill. It could involve the measurement of blood splatter patterns or the use of special light sources or chemical techniques to detect the possible presence of substances such as blood or semen.

"The tests we do in the field are presumptive; they indicate the possibility of such substances as semen or blood," Thomas explains. "We book it as evidence, but we don't do comparison or analysis. Our job is to ensure that everything has been covered, that we haven't overlooked what could be evidence in the field. It's critical for us to do so because we can't always go back."

Each piece of evidence is identified with an event number specific to the scene. Thomas carefully records each piece, noting what the evidence is and where it was found. She must be meticulous because, she explains, she may be called upon to testify in court weeks, months, or even years later.

"If I'm assigned to a case and I'm responsible for the evidence, then I take that responsibility very seriously," Thomas says. "I know that I'll have to explain to the court how the evidence was collected and where it was every step of the way. So it's crucial that I be able to account for it properly.

"In many cases, the collection of evidence extends beyond the initial crime scene. For example, Thomas recounts one incident in which a person was shot and had to be transported to the emergency room.

"Of course, the medical team had cut the T-shirt off the person by the time I arrived," Thomas says. "Now obviously a person's life is more important than any one piece of evidence, but this example shows that evidence can't always be collected under ideal conditions.

"Sometimes the officers have to barge into a scene because the suspect is still there. The evidence will be destroyed, but what's left of it still needs to be collected and documented."

As long as the evidence has not been compromised, Thomas sometimes travels from one crime scene to the next without a chance between cases to return the evidence to the crime lab. For this reason, all evidence is bagged under a crime scene event number and placed in her car before she leaves the scene.

The pace is often hectic, attention to detail is critical, and the CSA never knows what lies ahead. But Thomas wouldn't have it any other way.

"I choose this job because it suits my personality. I'm a strong person, and I have an inquisitive curiosity — two traits that make me well suited for this type of work," she says.

"The one drawback to her work, however, is the suffering she encounters.

"The worst is when the victim is suffering, and you know that the person is probably not going to make it. You feel helpless, and that's what's left of it still needs to be collected and documented."

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A TALENT FOR TEACHING TEACHERS

Special education professor Jeff Gelfer uses his research and enthusiasm for education to encourage his UNLV students to get the most out of teaching young children — and to try anything to make learning happen.

UNLV SPECIAL EDUCATION professor Jeff Gelfer has an autographed photo of Sesame Street characters Bert and Ernie on his desk. He probably knows — and would sing — "Rubber Ducky" if asked.

His unabashed appreciation of all things Sesame Street is a reflection of the child-like enthusiasm Gelfer has for teaching and learning. He loves to teach, and he especially loves to teach teachers how to teach. And he's willing to try just about any technique to help make learning happen.

"Kids are so unique, so individual in their learning styles, in their interests, in their rate of acquisition of knowledge," Gelfer says, "that teachers need to try different methods so they can discover what works and what doesn't. Teaching should be a ball. It should be a blast for early childhood teachers to take on the challenge because kids are so fascinating. "They are treasures of potential."

Gelfer, who joined the UNLV faculty in 1989, teaches in the university’s special education department and serves as co-coordinator of the UNLV Preschool. Both roles provide him the opportunity to achieve his goal of communicating his enthusiasm to his students.

"One of our biggest goals is to engender a love of learning, both in our preschool and with our students," says Gelfer, who holds a doctorate in child development. "And the wonderful thing about having the preschool on campus is that it offers UNLV students the chance to work in an early childhood education program and interact with the kids. They get to see how theory, knowledge, and method can be applied in real life."

Gelfer is also an active researcher, concentrating much of his study in the areas of portfolio assessment, inclusive education, and literacy. All three of these topics are discussed and advocated in his recent book, titled "Developing Literacy Naturally," which he coauthored with UNLV curriculum and instructional studies professor Thomas Bean and Arizona State University education professor Lyndon Searfoss.

Gelfer's work in portfolio assessment focuses on how teachers can use this technique more effectively to help students better understand their progress over a given period of time. He explains that a teacher who uses portfolio assessment collects samples of a child's best work and current progress reports to create a portfolio. Then, the teacher meets with the child on a regular basis and compares the most recent assignments with previous ones. The teacher points out various areas of improvement and suggests other areas to work on in the future. This technique can be used at any level in any classroom setting, according to Gelfer.

"Basically, we are trying to identify — and help the children identify — the growth and development that they have made over a period of time. We give them a chance to actually see what they are doing, rather than just seeing a grade," Gelfer says.

The principle of inclusive education can be applied in the classroom by having teachers focus on different aspects of the same subject in their lesson plans, Gelfer says. An example of how this can be accomplished is presented in his book; it describes how a class lesson can be designed to teach children of all levels about fish.

In this unit, Gelfer says, though all of the students participate in some learning experience involving fish, each student may enjoy a different aspect. The goal, he says, is to make all of the students feel they are a part of the classroom.

Some students might be focusing on how to maintain an aquarium, while others are focusing on how gills work, Gelfer says. "What we want to do when we are dealing with these kids is provide different experiences, but ones that have a relevant, consistent theme," Gelfer says. "That way, when kids work together in the classroom, no one is being isolated or told to do something different. It helps prevent kids from being made to feel slower or inferior. They then don't have to defend why they were given a special experience. It's a way of providing respect and dignity to everyone."

He notes that teachers must adapt their lesson plans to some degree to accommodate and include some of the traditional special education students in regular classes. But, he asserts, it can be done. He has enjoyed great success implementing such a program at the

A mother of Gelfer's research areas is inclusive education, which he describes as creating a classroom setting that provides equal instructional opportunities for all kids without isolating the ones with special educational needs. It allows children with exceptionalities to be part of a regular classroom.

"Inclusive education helps teach kids how to become sensitive to each other's differences," Gelfer says.

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Linda Caullas Caravas, '74 BS Education, '97 MS Counseling and Educational Psychology, is a part-time faculty member at UNLV's College of Education, teaching methods courses in instruction of foreign languages and instruction of English as a second language.

Johns L. Lee, '85 BS Chemistry, received a degree from Northwestern University's dental school in 1989. He is currently in a private dental practice in Seattle. Previously, he served six years in the Army dental corps.

Richard Kenneth Casillas Cavazos, '89 BA Advertising, is a principal with Shonkwiler-Marcoux, an advertising and public relations firm. Before joining Shonkwiler-Marcoux, he wanted more than two years in media management at the Rio San Juan.

Ann Latina, '94 BA Communication Studies, received her law degree from the University of Arizona in 1997. She is now an associate at the law firm of Jones, Skelton & Hochuli in Phoenix. She practices in the areas of municipal liability, insurance defense, and medical malpractice.

Thomas Kapp (formerly Kupsan), '95 MS Education, is a civilian worker at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Ala., where he started an early intervention program for infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities. Previously, he taught at schools in Australia and New Zealand. He lives in Prattsville.

Lucie M. Mutalib, '95 BA Communication Studies, is director of operations at American Media Corp., a full-service advertising, marketing, and public relations firm. She is pursuing a master's degree in communication studies at UNLV. She lives in Henderson.

Elizabeth Barron, '96 BS Psychology, is pursuing a master's degree in social work at Columbia University. She also works with children diagnosed with cancer. After graduating from UNLV, she served as a bilingual case manager at a homeless shelter. She also worked for the state of Nevada's welfare division. She lives in New York.

Lisa Behnke, '96 BS Business Administration, is the marketing manager for MCI/Force—Management Research Consultants. She manages and coordinates two Java group facilities and an on-site data collection by projects ranging from new site-mapping to new medical and surgical procedures.

Karen Ann Harrington, '96 BS Business Administration, is employed in the retail division of Discount Tire and currently is assigned to first shops in Florida. She is the author of a book, The 1990's Book For Parents and Professional Autism. Her chapter describes the perspective of a shifting up in a house with a brother who is autistic.

Send these cards and letters now! We've almost caught up on our immense backlog of class notes, so now's the time to bring us up to date on your accomplishments. We welcome all entries but especially those with head and肩膀 photos—other black and white or color—the list goes on. Please contact your classmates—look forward to hearing from you.

Michael DeLos. '90

Michael DeLos, '90 BA Psychology, is a senior vice president in the industrial division of Susan Marxer Commercial-ONCOR International. He also serves on the company's board of directors. The company is one of the largest commercial brokerage firms in Los Angeles. Previously, he worked at Berteau Commercial Real Estate, Land and Associates, and the Palm Business Center.

Christine Marie Pavlovich, '90

Christine Marie Pavlovich, '90 BS Hotel Administration, is an account executive with Shonkwiler-Marcoux Advertising and Public Relations. Previously, she was a production manager for AMDJ Advertising. She also has managed restaurants in the Las Vegas and Denver areas.

Thomas J. Heidet, '90 BS Civil Engineering and Bachelor of Fine Arts, works as an engineering techni-
**SEPTEMBER 1998**


11&12 Volleyball: UNLV vs. Youngstown State - Sept. 11, 2pm. New Mexico State - Sept. 11, 8pm. FBI Texas State - Sept. 12, 4:30pm. Lied Gymnasium. 895-3207.


12 Football: UNLV vs. Air Force. 7:05pm. Sam Boyd Stadium. 895-3900.

13 Women’s Soccer: UNLV vs. Missouri State. 4pm. Johann Field. 895-3207.

Faculty Recital: Rebecca Kreider. 2pm. Black Boyd Stadium. 895-3900.

State of the University Address: Carol C. Harter. 2pm. Judy Bayley Theatre. 895-3901.

17 Expressions Series: Sosidos Gitaros Flamenco. 8pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3901.

18&20 Women’s Soccer: UNLV vs Boise State - Sept. 18, 7pm. Idaho State - Sept. 20, 7pm. Johann Field. 895-3207.

21 Volleyball: UNLV vs. Utah State. 7pm. Lied Gymnasium. 895-3207.

26 Women’s Center: Fifth Annual Community Job Fair. 9am. Moyer Student Union Ballroom. 895-4475.


**OCTOBER 1998**


3 Football: UNLV vs. UNR. 7:05pm. Sam Boyd Stadium. 895-3900.


10 Concert: Men’s & Women’s Honor Chorus. 2pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

11 Concert: UNLV Symphony Orchestra. 7:30pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

14 Master Series: St. Petersburg State Symphony. 8pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

15&17 Volleyball: UNLV vs. SMU - Oct. 15, 7pm. TCU. Oct. 17, 7pm. Lied Gymnasium. 895-3207.

15-25 Play: Summer Sleep. 8pm for times. Black Box Theatre. 895-3900.

16 Moyer Student Union: MSU/CSU/SMU Crimson Ball. 8pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall Lobby. 895-3207.

17 Football: UNLV vs. Wyoming. 4:05pm. Sam Boyd Stadium. 895-3900.


25 Concert: 76 Trombones. 4:30pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

Concert: Jazz Ensemble. 7:30pm. Judy Bayley Theatre. 895-3901.

27 Women’s Center: Take Back The Night. 6pm. Pida Plaza. 895-4475.

27&30 Concert: Jazz Combos. 7:30pm. Black Box Theatre. 895-3901.


31 Football: UNLV vs. Tulsa. 1:05pm. Sam Boyd Stadium. 895-3900.

**NOVEMBER 1998**

2 Women’s Basketball: UNLV vs. Siena College. 7:35pm. Lied Gymnasium. 895-3207.

6-8 UNLV Opera Theatre: Fall production. 7:30pm. Judy Bayley Theatre. 895-3901.

6&7 Volleyball: UNLV vs. Tulsa - Nov. 6, 7pm. Rice - Nov. 7, 7pm. Lied Gymnasium. 895-3207.

6&7 Men’s Soccer: UNLV vs. SMU - Nov. 6, 7pm. TCU - Nov. 8, Noon. Johann Field. 895-3207.


10 Concert: Men’s & Women’s Honor Chorus. 2pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

11 Concert: UNLV Symphony Orchestra. 7:30pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

14 Master Series: Nigel Kennedy. 8pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

15&17 Volleyball: UNLV vs. SMU - Nov. 15, 7pm. SMU - Nov. 17, 7pm. Lied Gymnasium. 895-3207.

21 Football: UNLV vs. TCU. 1:05pm. Sam Boyd Stadium. 895-3900.

22 Concert: UNLV Symphony Orchestra. 7:30pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

24 Concert: Jazz Ensemble. 7:30pm. Black Box Theatre. 895-3800.

Concert: UNLV Wind Orchestra. 7:30pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

24-28 Volleyball: WAC Championship Tournament. All Day. MGM Grand Garden Arena. 895-3807.

30 Desert Chorale: The Messiah. 7:30pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

**DECEMBER 1998**

2 Expressions Series: Robert Bluetsone in Recital. 8pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

3 Concert: UNLV Brass Ensemble. 7:30pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

4-5 Dance: Dance Arts Company Concert. Call for times. Black Box Theatre. 895-3901.

Concert: Winter Choral Celebration. 7:30pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

Women’s Basketball Tournament: UNLV vs. Belmont - Dec. 4, 7pm. UNLV vs. TBA - Dec. 5, 5pm or 7pm. Lied Gymnasium. 895-3207.


**FEBRUARY 1999**


10 Campus Community Development: Human Rights Day Event. 7:30pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3201.

14 Concert: Desert Chorale Christmas Concert. 7:30pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.


**JANUARY 1999**

2 Women’s Basketball: UNLV vs. New Orleans. 5pm. Thomas & Mack Center. 895-3207.


6 Master Series: New York Philharmonic. 8pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

19-20 Expressions Series: Tango Buenos Aires. 8pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.


27 Expressions Series: Walter Naumburg Winner Exhibition. 8pm. Artemus Ham Concert Hall. 895-3801.

St. Petersburg State Symphony Oct. 14
Family Weekend ’98
UNLV students and their families are invited to attend Family Weekend ’98, a fun-filled weekend of academic, athletic, and social activities on campus.
Family Weekend ’98 is an excellent opportunity to learn more about UNLV and its programs and services, meet members of the UNLV administration and faculty, participate in classes and activities, and enjoy great food in a beautiful campus setting.

A complete listing of events is provided below. For more information, call 895-1754, leave a message, and a Family Weekend coordinator will return your call promptly.

FRIDAY, OCT. 2
Welcome Tables: Noon-6pm. Moyer Student Union, Rm. 111.
A Day In The Life: Visit a sampling of UNLV classes. Noon-4pm.
UNLV Family Open House: Visit various campus offices. Noon-4pm.
Academic Department Receptions: 4pm. Moyer Student Union Ballroom.
Family Welcome Barbeque: 5:30pm. Pida Plaza. $6 per person.
UNLV Friday Family Movie Night: 8pm. Moyer Student Union.

SATURDAY, OCT. 3
Fourth Annual Friendship Games: 10am-2pm. Field adjacent to women’s softball field.
UNLV vs. UNR Football: Tailgate party - 5-7pm. Game - 7:05pm. (Game tickets $7 for Family Weekend ’98 participants.) Post-game party following. Sam Boyd Stadium.

SUNDAY, OCT. 4
Family Pancake Breakfast: 9:30-11am. Moyer Student Union. $3 per person.
Campus Discovery Tours: 10:30am & 11am. Tours depart from pancake breakfast.
A Commitment to Excellence, Professionalism, and Service

The founding dean of the William S. Boyd School of Law outlines several themes that will guide the ongoing development of UNLV’s newest school.

BY RICHARD MORGAN
DEAN OF THE WILLIAM S. BOYD SCHOOL OF LAW

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S I HAVE SAID MANY TIMES, I think that I have the greatest job in American legal education — the job of helping to create an excellent law school for UNLV, Las Vegas, and Nevada. For the first time in 20 years, a state has created a law school at one of its public universities. The opportunity to found a new state law school would be attractive wherever it arose; but when it arises in a great state like Nevada, and at a strong university — UNLV, the opportunity becomes irresistible. It is because of the dynamism and beauty of Nevada, the strength of UNLV, and the uniqueness of the opportunity that I regard my job as founding dean of the William S. Boyd School of Law as the best in legal education.

Having been entrusted by UNLV President Carol Harter, who was the driving force behind the creation of the law school, with the responsibility of developing the law program for UNLV, I and my colleagues are mindful of the responsibility that we have to build a law school that will be a credit to UNLV, to Las Vegas, and to Nevada and that will contribute to the improvement of legal education in this country. We hope to accomplish these goals by concentrating on a number of themes as we continue to recruit faculty and students, structure our academic program, and plan our community activities. These themes are described below.

Helping UNLV to continue its upward trajectory — toward becoming, as President Harter says, “a premier urban university” — is another major theme of the Boyd Law School. We are delighted to be a part of this excellent university and to have been assigned a permanent home, which we will occupy in two or three years, in the James R. Dickinson Library in the center of campus. We want the law school to play a central role in the life of UNLV; we hope to engender the development of that role through interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship, selected joint programs, and participation by law faculty and students in campus governance.

Professionalism is another major theme of the Boyd Law School. In our academic program we will stress the importance and nobility of the legal profession. We will teach about the lives of great lawyers — people who used their legal training to make a real difference in the world — and provide our students with some context about what it means to become a lawyer, about what lawyers do, and about the skills and values that lawyers need in the myriad roles that they play in our society. We will also help the students understand the roles of all of the branches and levels of government, not just the judicial branch, and help them to understand the entire continuum of the dispute resolution process, not just litigation. It is also one of our goals to provide the students with an appropriate blend of traditional legal education and skills training, including a heavy emphasis on writing. Our faculty will be involved — through continuing education programs, bar and court committees, legal scholarship, and the like — in work that should help the Nevada legal profession continue its improvement and its professionalism. That involvement, by the way, will be very useful to our faculty, who benefit greatly from interactions with lawyers, judges, and others in the profession and the community.

Accessibility will be another theme. The Boyd Law School offers a full-time day program of law study, the duration of which will be three years. It also offers a four-year, part-time night program, which means that people who must work during the day can consider a law school education. The day program enrolled approximately 75 students when the law school opened its doors this semester. About 65 students are enrolled in the night program.

Excellence — admittedly an overworked goal — is the final theme of the law school. We will strive for excellence right from the beginning, in everything that we do. The founding faculty — eight experienced legal educators from well-respected law schools throughout the country — bring excellent reputations as teachers, mentors, scholars, and community servants. The initial staff, also drawn from fine institutions across the nation, is committed to providing the support that will enable our faculty and students to excel. The university community of which we are a part — from President Harter on down — is extremely supportive of our new enterprise and of its goal of becoming one of the best law schools in the country. The curriculum is being developed by our faculty with the goal of excellence in mind, it will contain a combination of traditional legal education and training in lawyering skills, professionalism, and community service. The facilities of the law school will be excellent when we occupy the renovated Dickinson Library, and even at the outset they will be reasonable, during our temporary occupancy of the former Paradise Elementary School.

Of course, the real key to excellence is the students. We cannot accomplish the lofty goals stated above without excellent students. Fortunately, the charter class we have recruited is strong; they will help us to establish the sort of community and culture that will stand the Boyd Law School in good stead for years to come. We are all very excited about this enterprise, one that we believe is poised to fulfill its potential. We will seek accreditation from the American Bar Association at the earliest possible time; our application can be filed August 1999, and accreditation could be granted as early as spring of 2000. However, we hope to be much more than an “accredited” law school. We hope to be an excellent law school and an important part of UNLV and of this community.

If you would like to learn more about the Boyd Law School, feel free to contact me at (702) 895-1876. If you are interested in applying to become a law student, please contact Admissions Dean Frank Durand at (702) 895-3671. Thanks for your interest.

Dawn Richard Morgan
Boyd Law School

Community Service will be the overarching theme of the Boyd School of Law. We hope to serve the community in many ways: educating tomorrow’s lawyers and leaders, by commenting on and critiquing public policy and legal developments through faculty and student scholarship, by providing access to legal materials at an excellent law library, and by serving unrepresented clients through our legal clinics. We also plan to provide forums for important speakers and conferences; to participate in educational programs for lawyers, judges, legislators, and the public; and to serve on professional and civic boards and organizations. The Boyd School of Law aspire to be an integral and essential part of this wonderful city and university, while it serves the entire state.

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Teachers
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UNLV Preschool.
Through that program, more than 25 disabled and severely disabled kids who have been referred by the Clark County School District are enrolled in the UNLV Preschool, where they learn side-by-side with the other kids.

“We've seen kids working together with no resistance to the differences of their classmates,” Gelfer says, adding that he, special education professor John Filler, and several UNLV doctoral students are conducting a study on how friendships between the two groups of kids evolve. “I'm very pleased with the results of the program.”

He hopes to start a similar program at the kindergarten at Paradise Elementary School, a public school recently relocated to the UNLV campus that serves as a professional practice school for UNLV students who plan to become teachers.

Gelfer's third area of research — literacy — naturally finds its way into just about every aspect of his teaching and research. He is the first to admit that he advocates it with an activist's zeal; he has written extensively on the subject and speaks about it frequently. In his most recent project, family literacy is the focus.

As part of the project — which is being funded by a grant from the Nevada Even Start Literacy Program — Gelfer and his special education department colleague Kyle Higgins drive about 50 miles north of Las Vegas several days each week to the Indian Reservation at Moapa to help more than 60 residents there earn their GEDs, develop their English language skills, and/or enhance their parenting techniques. At the same time, Gelfer and Higgins are helping the residents' children become more proficient in their reading and writing skills.

“We want to help the parents become more effective both in society and with their children,” Gelfer says. “We also want to help the kids become better readers and writers.”

The project emphasizes a theme Gelfer vigorously supports — that literacy should be a family affair.

“All of the teaching methods and programs available mean nothing without the support of parents,” he says, noting that the more parents read to and with their kids, the stronger the promotion of literacy is.

It's equally important for parents to model the reading behavior they hope to engender in their children, he adds.

“What is most important in language learning and literacy learning is demonstrating a love for language and a love for learning,” he says. “The parent and teacher have to model that desire, that thirst to learn as much as possible. I think if you model it, it is emulated.”

Gelfer, whose master's degree is in literacy and learning disabilities, believes that there is no one “right way” to teach children language skills — or anything else.

“I don't say one approach is the best,” Gelfer says. “Each one can be the best, depending on the child. Teachers must pick and choose among the methods available in order to find the ones most likely to fit each child's learning styles and needs. You may not want to use a certain approach with certain kids, but if you are going to try to cultivate knowledge, literacy, and language, you've got to know it. Therefore, it's imperative for teachers-to-be to become knowledgeable about the many methods of teaching reading.”

For example, Gelfer believes that both phonetics and the whole language approach are useful in teaching children to read. He teaches his UNLV students how to use both.

“Teachers need to experiment with different things,” Gelfer says. “What might work for one child may not work for another.”

Gelfer says that one of the consistently effective ways of helping kids learn is finding their interest areas and tapping into them. “If the subject is relevant to the child, then retention is 100 percent,” he says.

And if that means singing “Rubber Ducky” to get their attention, so be it, he adds with a smile. Use anything, he advises his students, to make learning happen.

New Education Degree Developed

A new degree program for students who want to specialize in early childhood education is slated to begin this fall, pending approval by the Board of Regents.

The 2+2 Early Childhood Education Program has been designed to provide comprehensive preparation and education for teachers in early childhood settings, such as day care facilities, preschools, hospitals, community education programs, and early intervention programs.

“Students will have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills for a variety of careers in educational and intervention programs for young children,” said UNLV special education professor Jeff Gelfer, who helped design the program.

The degree program was created through a collaborative effort between UNLV's early childhood special educators and general early childhood educators, as well as faculty from the Community College of Southern Nevada. One of the program's goals is to enable community college students to transfer easily to UNLV to complete their bachelor's degrees in this field.

Students will be able to develop their teaching skills by participating in practicum components in their courses, as well as student teaching.
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