UNLV Magazine

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UNLV Magazine

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Coming of Age

New preschool facility is a center of learning for students of all ages
For more information about the UNLV Foundation and the Rebel Ring Phonathon, please call (702) 895-3641.

Jim Zeiter '87 BS Business and Finance is a member of the Board of Trustees for the UNLV Foundation. He leads this year's efforts to raise $1.4 million in unrestricted funds for UNLV.

When I was an undergraduate student, I knew that my affiliation with UNLV would extend long beyond my days of classes in Beam Hall. Today, as managing partner of Insight Holdings and the father of two young boys, I appreciate why higher education is important to our economy, our community, and our future. I choose to invest my time and support in UNLV and I invite you to join me.

This spring, students from our Rebel Ring Phonathon will reach nearly 25,000 alumni to share personalized updates on their colleges and programs. When one of our students calls your home, strike up a conversation. Ask about your former professors. Share your college experiences. Learn how you can make a difference at UNLV.

These students will explain how you can help fund priority issues in your college or program of choice. Please consider carefully how you will invest in your alma mater, and make your pledge for annual support.
On the Cover: Outside the new Lynn Bennett Early Childhood Education Center are: (standing) UNLV/CSUN Preschool teacher and graduate student Jen Nash, holding Olivia Vaughan, and teacher's assistant Damika Parker; (kneeling) teacher's assistant Amanda Moss; and (from left) preschoolers Janelle Rodas, Kira Champelli, and Keenan Hubel.

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A Renewed Commitment

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the campus, the Southern Nevada community, the Board of Regents, and the chancellor for their recent support of my contract extension. I was grateful for the unanimous vote by the board to extend my tenure as president to 2008, which will enable me and my leadership team to continue advancing the mission of our growing institution. Although I am naturally delighted by this development, I must note for the record that I believe that this affirming vote of confidence is chiefly attributable to the recent accomplishments of the university as a whole. As a result, I share this achievement with the entire campus and those in the community who have so generously contributed their time and resources to promote the success of UNLV.

I also appreciate receiving the feedback provided by those who participated in my evaluation, which is an integral part of the contract renewal process. The input of faculty, staff, and numerous donors, and community leaders into the evaluation is invaluable and has produced some very useful information about our challenges and our strengths. I feel it is important that I share this feedback with the university’s key stakeholders, so I have taken some significant insights into both what we have accomplished and what lies ahead.

By way of background, I should note that two independent but complementary evaluations were conducted as part of the contract renewal process—one through procedures prescribed by UCCSN policy and the other performed on campus through the Faculty Senate—and both offered extremely valuable feedback. The first was conducted by a committee chaired by Dave Frohnmaier, the president of the University of Oregon, who led two regents and two alumni as they followed UCCSN evaluation procedures. This included reviewing various background materials, such as plans and documents, my self-evaluation and numerous reports, and conducting extensive interviews with representatives of virtually all of the university’s major constituent groups, including faculty and department chairs; students and student leaders; dean and administrators; classified and professional staff; and alumni, donors, and members of the community. A total of 70 individuals from these various and critical constituencies participated in the process.

The evaluation report produced through this process included a variety of complimentary (even glowing) observations about our achievements. It noted the visionary and transformative nature of our endeavors and indicated that what distinguishes these endeavors is our ability to translate and implement our vision into effective programs, clearly stated priorities, and are fully weighted choices.

For example, the report acknowledges the university’s trebling of external research support, a robust capital construction program, the breadth of new program and curriculum offerings (including major schools of law, dentistry, and architecture, among others), and the impressive demonstration of new sources of private support. Of particular interest to the committee also was a campus culture that grows support and change with a spirit of enthusiasm. “The campus community, especially its new leadership team, is excited by the prospects for its growth and maturity. The decisions made to this point cumulatively are responsible for the rapid growth in UNLV’s resources, facilities, programs, and stature. Unlike many campuses in the United States, UNLV has experienced change and growth as positive values.” It was given in the report to refer to and again to the existence of energy, support, and widely shared motivating values in the campus environment. The report states, “The remarkable growth in national stature of UNLV is reflected in the university’s praised academic programs, new hires, the excellence of its leadership team, and optimism and pride which is shared broadly internally and externally.”

While this kind of praise was prevalent throughout the report, one should not assume that critical feedback was lacking in the evaluation team’s comments. Many challenges were identified, however none were of a surprising nature to me or to anyone with current knowledge of the campus. I believe they were summarized most succinctly in the following paragraph: “President Harter’s agenda is not without challenges that will require focused attention. ... Growth management remains an opportunity as much as a road difficult to navigate. Translating the research focus into messages with the public and academic support is an ongoing challenge. Student services are perceived by some to require a greater customer ethic. Media coverage has not reflected the institution’s growing national stature.” Some of these constructive criticisms were echoed in the survey results from faculty and staff members in the evaluation conducted for the UNLV Faculty Senate. The survey was designed to measure my performance in achieving a number of objectives, including most of the university’s strategic goals. Although I was continued on page 28

$3 Million Pledged for New Research Facility

UNLV has received commitments of more than $3 million to support its Science, Engineering and Technology Building, a facility that will attract top-caliber student and faculty while supporting economic diversification in Nevada. The gifts, made through the UNLV Foundation, are from some of the university’s long-time supporters, Sierra Health Services and its subsidiary company Health Plan of Nevada are partnering to give $1.35 million. Fred Cox, a member of the UNLV Board of Trustees, and his wife, Harriet, have committed $1 million. Bechtel National will contribute $500,000. P&S, an engineering firm with local offices in Henderson, has promised $150,000 ($100,000 toward the building and $50,000 for other purposes in UNLV’s Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering).

The “Science, Engineering and Technology building is the cornerstone of our mission to become a premier research institution,” UNLV President Carol C. Harter said. “We cannot express enough our appreciation for the outstanding contributions these community partners have shown in advancing our mission. Research activity is a vital part of our community, and these contributions will enable us to engage in cutting-edge, multidisciplinary research.”

The building is a major step in increasing momentum for Nevada’s economic diversification efforts. Empowered with the resources needed to compete with other states, UNLV will be able to recruit and retain the best and brightest students from Nevada and around the globe.

As these students graduate, they will increase the pool of qualified employees available to Nevada businesses. In addition, faculty and student researchers will be able to increase their collaborations with local and academic partnerships, and the academic environment sought by technology-based companies.

“Facility has a unique resource that has tremendous implications for the region,” said Raymond W. Alden, executive vice president and provost. “Not only will it greatly enhance the educational and research experiences of our students and faculty, but it will also allow UNLV to become a top research institution and serve as a catalyst for economic diversification in Nevada.”

The 190,000-square-foot building, slated for completion in 2007, will include state-of-the-art labs, “smart” conference rooms, and integrated research space.

Research will include issues in energy and materials sciences, entertainment and convention technology, arid land sciences, and cyberinfrastructure.

For more information, visit www.unlv.edu/pubs/scientech.

Dental School Clinic Now Screening Patients

The UNLV School of Dental Medicine is now screening patients for acceptance in its clinic, which will open this summer. The clinic is open to all Nevadans including those participating in the Nevada Check-Up and Medicaid programs.

Patients will be treated by dental students under the supervision of faculty dentists. Patients will be accepted if they have dental needs that fit with the students' educational needs.

For more information, call the School of Dental Medicine at 702-895-0451.

Boyd Law School Achieves Milestone

The William S. Boyd School of Law has been admitted as a member of the prestigious Association of American Law Schools, a nonprofit organization of 164 institutions. The association admits law schools based on such criteria as the quality of law faculty scholarship and teaching, the suitability of its law library and facilities, and the effectiveness of its curriculum.
Harrah's Archives Housed at Lied Library

Hundreds of photographs, publications, documents, and artifacts chronicling the 65-year history of Harrah's Entertainment Inc. are now housed in special collections at the Lied Library, thanks to a donation by the Las Vegas-based gaming company.

"Anyone wanting to get into the growth and changes in the gaming/hotel/resort industry over the years will find this corporate collection invaluable," said Peter Michel, director of special collections.

The extensive materials include celebrity memorabilia, financial reports, publicity files, corporate communications, film, videotape, and promotional items. The collection also contains materials about founder William Harrah's large antique car collection and his historical game and card collection.

The collection is part of the Gaming Studies Research Center and is open to the public.

KUNV Pumps Up the Volume with New Programming

By Gian Galassi

As more and more venues catering to Las Vegas' jazz enthusiasts close, KUNV 91.5 FM continues to breathe new life into the classic serif form.

Now in its sixth year with an all-jazz format on weekdays and an eclectic mix of world music on weekends, the station has been steadily increasing its audience. And while simply staying on air in a notoriously difficult market would cause enough for some to rest on their laurels, the handful of dedicated staff members and volunteers are not satisfied with the status quo. They continue to both strengthen and refocus their efforts.

Under the management of communications professor Anthony Ferris, the station has made several changes to expand its loyal fan base. Most notable is the addition of program director Pat Brown, a former radio broadcaster, saxophonist, and percussionist. Brown knows what it takes to please an audience. His extensive experience includes stints at some of the nation’s most popular jazz radio stations, including the industry leader WBGO in New Jersey.

“We are now refocusing our playlist to bring more continuity to our sound," says Brown, who wants to restore a consistent flow to the daily schedule. "Listeners are going to have a much clearer idea of where the music they’re hearing is headed.”

Lori Huerta, director of marketing and membership, explained that the station’s appeal has always been its traditional jazz programming, which was largely missing from the Las Vegas airwaves before KUNV’s 1998 format change. "There are other jazz stations out there but they tend to cater more to the soft jazz audience," says Huerta. "Our listeners tend to be local musicians and jazz aficionados who want to preserve traditional jazz in town and who want to hear intelligent information about the music they love.”

Brown hopes a recent retooling of the production suite will attract program directors with international experience and growing popularity will translate into additional resources if we’re going to accomplish with the equipment and personnel we have is nothing short of particular jazz scene it promotes.

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Although jazz will always be the main focus of KUNV, two programs have been added recently to attract a wider audience.

Last fall, KUNV became the home for a retooling of a popular radio program hosted by Las Vegas weatherman Nate Tannenbaum. The program, which can be heard Saturdays at 10 a.m., features notable local guests and out-of-town visitors who discuss and play eclectic selections of their favorite music.

Also added is “Our Metropolis,” a half-hour talk show Sunday mornings about Southern Nevada issues. It is hosted by history professor Hal Rothman, and guests have included Pat Mulroy, general manager of the Las Vegas Valley Water Authority; Dina Titus, state senator and UNLV professor; and Thom Reilly, Clark County manager.

Huerta and Brown both hope that KUNV’s increasingly diverse programming and growing popularity will translate into more financial support for the station. It relies on membership dues, underwriting support, and grants from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to pay its bills – including its off-campus rent. The station occasionally receives support from various Las Vegas venues and the artists who play them, but there’s no misconception about the nature of the particular jazz scene it promotes.

"While smooth jazz artists are traveling, the world playing 17,000-seat arenas," Brown explains, "the traditional jazz musicians that we typically promote are still playing for $50 and dinner at the local pub.”

On the station’s “wish list” for 2004 is new equipment for remote broadcasts, server space for broadcasting live over the Internet, a music scheduling and cataloging system, and better production facilities. “The things this station has been able to accomplish with the equipment and facilities that we have is nothing short of amazing," says Brown. “But we need to tap into additional resources if we’re going to build on those accomplishments and truly reach our full potential.”

For more information, visit kunv.unlv.edu or call 702-798-9169.

Historian Documents Nevada Test Site Memories

Mary Palevsky’s resume contains all the academic qualifications you would expect of an oral historian. Yet her most compelling credential is that she was born into a family of storytellers and scientists.

Her parents – both scientists with the Manhattan Project, the secret World War II atomic weapons development program – would often tell stories that, Palevsky realized later, were filled with the moral dilemmas associated with the project’s legacy.

New as director of UNLV’s Nevada Test Site Oral History Project, Palevsky will document similar stories of people involved with the Nevada Test Site (NTS).

“There are many interesting parallels between the ethos of scientists, like my father, who did no weapons work postwar, and of those who worked at the NTS,” Palevsky said. “They all shared an amazing commitment to ingenuity, hard work, and sacrifice that their work demanded of them, regardless of their politics. However, I think a lot of people have misconceptions about who these scientists really were, and why they could be human in certain ways.”

Working with history professor Andy Kirk and sociology professor Robert Fustrell, Palevsky expects to interview more than 100 individuals this year. The three-year project is funded by a $582,000 federal grant.

Interviews will include scientists, administrators, and politicians as well as technicians, soldiers, secretaries, security guards, and others who did not have high-profile roles at the site. Also among proposed interviewees are protesters, “downwinders,” and American Indians whose lives were impacted by the test site.

“The fabulous thing about oral history is that it’s a method to document the experiences and views of people who would not normally be included in the historical record,” she said. “Their voices can democratize history, reminding us that history is made by all of us.”

Palevsky’s own interest in oral history didn’t manifest itself until the late 1980s, when she began recording the memoirs of her dying father. Although the subject left her with many questions as they did answers, the experience, along with the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, inspired her to seek out other Manhattan Project scientists.

Her research resulted in a book, Atomic Fragments: A Daughter’s Questions, which weaves together personal inquiry and oral history to examine the legacy of the Manhattan Project and to better understand the impact it had on her own life. She hopes the NTS project will do the same for others.

“Many people’s lives in Nevada were affected by what happened at the test site, so I think that the stories that come out of this project will be important to them,” she said. “It’s an essentially interesting picture of the development in American culture during the Cold War, not the least of which is the amazing secrecy surrounding nuclear weapons and the science behind them. ”

“I don’t think we comprehend the extent to which nuclear weapons have changed our own lives. What is striking to me is the diversity of views people hold about their meaning.”

All tapes and transcripts from the project will be housed in the Lied Library’s special collections department, where they will be made available to the public.

— Gian Galassi
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What could tiny fruit flies and human beings possibly have in common? While most of us probably would respond, "absolutely nothing," a team of UNLV researchers is proving that these insects are more closely related to us then we might have ever imagined.

"Few people outside the circles of biology appreciate that the brain cells of the fruit fly are remarkably similar to those in humans," biological sciences professor Stephen Roberts says. "Because of the similarity, studies on these insects can help us understand -- and perhaps even improve -- the human condition. Surprisingly enough, fruit flies have even been the study organism of several Nobel laureates in medicine and physiology."

These small creatures can be conditioned for learning -- much like the famous dogs used in Pavlov's historic work, Roberts notes. But more importantly, the fruit fly offers a powerful model for identifying the genetic, developmental, and environmental underpinnings of brain anatomy and function in humans.

Consequently, the common fruit fly is at the heart of a three-year study led by Roberts and fellow professor Steven de Belle to determine the negative impacts of environmental stress on early brain development and behavior. Along with graduate student Xia Wang and laboratory technician David Green, they are also exploring the flipside of this issue to determine if a sensory-enriched environment can positively influence brain growth and function -- or even repair damage caused by prior exposure to stressful conditions.

With a $330,000 National Science Foundation (NSF) grant, the group first intends to discover how exposure to heat stress and environmental toxins disrupts brain maturation. They have already learned that subjecting developing flies to high temperatures for 35 minutes a day causes significant developmental disruption to a section of the insect brain that is similar to the human hippocampus, the center of associative learning. (Further findings, however, indicate that the heat stress has little effect on other brain regions or body parts of the flies.) As part of this initial experimentation, the team also hopes to identify how this impairment directly affects the flies' learning and memory functions.

The next step is to determine whether a sensory-enriched environment with a constant optimum temperature and pleasing aromas -- which to a fruit fly are rotten fruit odors -- will "heal" the impaired brain anatomy and cognitive functions.

The final goal is to identify the genes -- regions of DNA that contain the instructions for synthesizing proteins -- that are affected by stress and sensory enrichment. There are roughly 30,000 genes in humans that provide the code for approximately 100,000 proteins -- cut these numbers in half and that's what it takes to make a fruit fly.

"With the latest DNA technologies, including microarray analysis, we will be able to identify the environmentally sensitive genes that affect brain development and memory," Roberts says. "Perhaps one day these could be used as targets of gene therapy that might prove useful for those suffering from such things as memory loss, Alzheimer's disease, or brain injuries."

Both scientists study a variety of genetically engineered flies in their research programs, although their joint project employs wild flies collected at Gilcrease Orchard in north Las Vegas. Much of their work takes place in the newly established UNLV Stress Genomics Center, a 1,200-square-foot biotechnology facility located in White Hall. The center is the only one of its kind in Southern Nevada and houses a half million dollars' worth of advanced molecular biology equipment for research related to human, animal, and plant genes.

The center further affords students the opportunity to actively enhance their classroom experiences by working in the laboratory on a major federally sponsored research project. Funding for the facility was made available through a grant from the NSF's Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR). The grant was written by Roberts and biological sciences faculty member Carl Reiber.

Since their arrival at UNLV, Roberts (hired in 1999) and de Belle (hired in 1997) have received more than $5 million in federal research funding. The money is supporting the development and maintenance of important life science research facilities, such as the UNLV Center for Biological Imaging, which is under de Belle's direction. The work of the two scholars, who have published their findings in some of the country's top professional journals, including Nature Genetics, Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, and Science, reflects the strides UNLV is making in becoming a major metropolitan research university.

"This research is not only covering new ground but is expected to be a springboard for additional studies of the biological and social environment and its influences on gene expression, brain development, and learning and memory," Roberts says. "
In a cause

Center for Urban Partnerships is fostering hope for Nevada’s hardest-to-place children looking for a home.

By Gian Galassi

It’s no secret that child welfare agencies have long been overwhelmed by heavy workloads and bantam budgets. Nevada is no exception. Social workers nationwide are struggling to find permanent placements for nearly 126,000 children who, in some cases, have been waiting the better part of their childhood for a place to call home.

Compounding the difficulty of the job is the fact that approximately 50 percent of these kids are over the age of 9 or have other “special needs,” which, studies show, significantly decrease their chances of being adopted. In adoption terms, special needs children include those who are older, from racial or ethnic minority groups, members of sibling groups, or who have special emotional, behavioral, developmental, or medical problems. Although recent federal legislation is providing incentives to promote the adoption of special needs kids, many child welfare workers believe that the support infrastructure required to successfully improve the situation still needs shoring up.

For the past two years, UNLV’s Center for Urban Partnerships (CUP) has collaborated with state and county child welfare agencies on a comprehensive Adoption Project to do just that. CUP researchers believe that the Adoption Project, which is funded by a state grant, will help shape future adoption policy, improve placement practices, and enhance worker and student training.

Special Needs, Special Solutions

The project’s initial study, titled “Adoption: Those Who Wait, Those Who Do Not, and the Reasons Why,” developed an in-depth profile of the children awaiting adoption in Nevada. Working with the state Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and the Clark County Department of Family Services (DFS), UNLV researchers conducted an exhaustive review of the case records to determine exactly who these children are, where they reside, what obstacles they face, and what factors increase the likelihood for their adoption.
The results, which were compiled last summer, were typical of a national profile: the most difficult children for Nevada to place are older children of color who have multiple special needs and who have spent numerous years in foster care. While the realities for this subset of kids are seemingly grim, CUP interim director Ramona Denty says the data enhances child welfare professionals’ efforts to find permanent homes for children.

“But it’s not an easy thing to do. Some of these kids have experienced horrendous abuse and have been left with severe emotional problems. Unfortunately, a 9-year-old who requires psychiatric care is not an attractive option for adoptive parents.”

Building on previous studies, Denby and her colleagues will further define what motivates the people who do adopt children with special needs and what the state can do to target similar prospective parents and help them follow through with an adoption.

Often the most able caregivers for these children are the people who already have an emotional investment in their lives. Kinship care, or the arrangement in which a family member accepts primary responsibility for a child, is considered to be the best option for kids when the birthparents are not able to care for them.

“Relatives are usually the most viable resource these kids have,” Denby explains. “Most relatives are willing to take kids in temporarily, but we’re looking at ways in which we can increase the support services available to them so that they can more easily become permanent options for the kids. It’s a much better alternative than having the child experience multiple foster care placements with strangers.”

Although placement of special needs kids is a major challenge for child welfare officials, recent federal legislation has dramatically improved adoption rates across the country. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 is credited with more than doubling the number of adoptions in Nevada by reducing unnecessary administrative barriers and providing some modest financial incentives. This past November, the federal government renewed ASFA, expanded an adoption tax credit, and included a provision that sends states an additional $4,000 for every adoption of a child over the age of 9. Naturally, the legislation has been hailed by most child welfare workers as a long-overdue victory for children who might have otherwise spent their entire childhood in foster care or group homes. But the law’s attendant success has also uncovered some deficiencies in the system, not the least of which is the aforementioned lack of support services available to both pre- and post-adaptive families.

As a result, the number of dissolved or unsuccessful adoptions has grown along with the number of placements of special needs kids.

“Unfortunately what happens sometimes is that parents will adopt children who have significant physical or psychological problems only to give them back in six months because they were unprepared or untrained by the system that these kids require,” says Denby. "One of the most important aspects of the center’s research will lead to a recruitment protocol that will not only help the state target prospective adoptive parents but will also identify the kinds of support these families need to ensure that the adoptions become permanent ones.”

The multi-module training program is available via Web-based streaming video or on VHS cassette and covers topics such as kinship care, sibling placements, independent living issues, adoption, substance abuse, appreciative inquiry, and the Multi-ethnic Placement Act. Additional modules will be created later this year as data from other School of Social Work and CUP studies become available.

The preliminary results were also used to revise curriculum used in social work courses at UNLV, including one under-graduate course in general child welfare and a graduate course designed for family-centered practitioners.

—Ramona Denby, Center for Urban Partnerships
For the children, it's a fun place to be. Easels set up near a mock dry riverbed provide a picturesque setting for a would-be Monet. In nearby classrooms, panels of glass windows can be raised like garage doors to allow the preschool teachers to expand their lessons from the traditional classroom setting to the outdoors. And, come summertime, the dancing waters of a permanent water play area will be the source of refreshing relief from Las Vegas' triple-digit temperatures.

For the children, the newly opened Lynn Bennett Early Childhood Education Center, which now houses the UNLV/CSUN Preschool is a fun place to be. For their parents—many of them UNLV students—it's an enriching place for their children to learn while they attend their own classes or work. For the staff of the center and for administrators, professors, and students of the College of Education, the $5.8 million center is a dream realized. The 20,932 square feet of indoor space allows the preschool staff to improve its already excellent programming (it is one of only a few centers in Southern Nevada to achieve accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children) in ways that simply wouldn't have been possible in the old facilities in the Carlson Education Building and in portable units nearby. Set on 62,000 square feet of land at the north end of the campus, the new center has two-and-a-half times more outdoor space than the old facilities.

And not only did the center get more space when it moved into its new quarters in January, it—just as importantly—got improved space. Two specially designed research classrooms, for instance, are equipped with laptop stations and one-way mirrors so UNLV students and their professors can observe the lessons without disrupting the...
Choosing Your Child’s Preschool

Catherine Lyons, director of the UNLV/CSUN Preschool, offers this list of questions to ask when selecting a preschool:

1. Is the facility licensed? Check with your state, county, or city licensing departments to see if a school has any violations noted during inspections or if any complaints have been filed against it.

2. Has the school achieved national accreditation? Accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (www.naeyc.org) shows that the school is committed to ongoing program improvement, Lyons says.

3. How large are the classes? Lyons recommends no more than 20 children per classroom with a minimum of two adults.

4. What credentials do the teachers hold?

5. What safety features are incorporated into the facility? “In general, the classroom should be arranged at the child’s level,” Lyons says. “If they can’t reach an item, they won’t be able to learn from it.”

6. Does the curriculum promote hands-on, center-based learning? “Children this age should not be sitting at desks doing worksheets. They should be able to choose from skill-building activities.

7. How is literature integrated into the classroom? “Beginning at birth – if not before, children should be in a literacy-rich environment in which stories are read, discussed, and made up by the children.”

8. How do teachers facilitate friendships? “Forming friendships is one of the developmental milestones for young children. We give families the opportunity to contact one another to arrange play dates, and we hold monthly events so families can see us facilitate interactions among the children.”

9. How is discipline handled? “Our center uses redirection rather than time outs when children exhibit inappropriate behaviors.”

The preschool’s curriculum creates a literature-enriched environment with hands-on learning activities. (Above) Tara Louviere, a full-time teacher, with 3-year-old Kamileah Kerr. (Top right) Jack Hager. (Right) Teacher’s assistant Melissa Stinnett, with Georgia McKnight.

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“Working here is not only helping me get through college, it’s helping me improve my professional communication skills,” says Edralin, who has headed the UNLV/CSUN Preschool for eight years.

“Being told you’re going to be part of developing an entirely new, state-of-the-art early childhood center from conception through implementation is something I never would have dreamed of. Yet here it is.”

“This new center is enabling us to build on what I believe was already outstanding programming in ways that will greatly benefit the families we serve as well as the UNLV students who use the center in their academic endeavors,” she says, noting that the preschool is a resource to students majoring in education, psychology, physical therapy, nursing, and food and beverage management.

In addition, the center is one of the largest employers of student workers on campus, with 135 students employed in such positions as classroom aids.

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## Alumni Association Recognizes Top Alumni, Supporter

Through its annual awards programs, the UNLV Alumni Association recognizes individuals who are sterling performers in their fields and who symbolize the ideals of higher learning. The association recently named television producer Anthony Zuiker as its 2003 Alumnus of the Year while community leader Robert N. Broadbent was honored posthumously with the Silver State Award — the top award presented to a non-alumnus. In addition, seven graduates received the Outstanding College Alumni Award.

Zuiker, '91 BA Communication Studies, is the creator and executive producer of the hit television series CSI: Crime Scene Investigations and CSI: Miami. He has lectured in UNLV classes and continues to support the film department. Zuiker also received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from UNLV in May 2003.

Broadbent, a pharmacist, served as a Boulder City mayor and Clark County commissioner. As director of aviation, he oversaw the expansion of McCarran International Airport. He is credited with making the newly named Robert N. Broadbent Las Vegas Monorail a reality and helped UNLV acquire the former Paradise Elementary School property.

Each year since 1977, the association has recognized outstanding alumni, as well as one non-graduate, for their professional achievements and contributions to the university. In 1996, the program was expanded to recognize individuals from each college.

The intention of these recognitions is to salute academic performance and leadership in a variety of professional areas, and to serve as a point of inspiration to the generations of students that will follow," explains Jim Kirkwood, Alumni Association president.

College award recipients are:

- **Business**: Chip Johnson, '71 BS Business Administration.
- **Education**: Christine Chaired, '83 BA and '85 MA Political Science and '01 Ed.D Educational Leadership.
- **Engineering**: Joseph Lombardo, '86 BS Geology and '91 MS Computer Science.
- **Fine Arts**: Kasey Baker-Benot, '97 BS and '99 MA Architecture.

**Alumni News**

The UNLV Alumni Association named TV producer Anthony Zuiker (above) its 2003 Alumnus of the Year. (Right) Broadbent accepted the Silver State Award from President Carol C. Harter on behalf of his father, the late Robert N. Broadbent.

- **Honors**: Mei Mei Wong, '93 BS Mathematical Sciences.
- **Hotel Administration**: Tony Santos, '84 BS Hotel Administration.
- **Liberal Arts**: Stanos Anderson, '67 MA Political Science and '99 PhD Sociology.

## License Plates Express Pride, Raise Funds

As the driver of the late-model sedan pulsed up to the light, he beamed a greeting to the younger man in the pick-up truck that has seen better days. The second driver couldn’t understand his congratulation to the luxury-car owner until he realized they both proudly display Rebel License plates.

Since its introduction in 1998, the license plate program has raised nearly $325,000 — proceeds of which benefit scholarships and endowments.

As you might expect, some dedicated university leaders, such as President Carol C. Harter and Russell Kost, assistant vice president of alumni relations & development, drive cars with the customizable plates. But enthusiastic alumni are getting into the spirit too. Currently, 3,000 Nevada drivers have the Hey Reb plates. "Alumni and '4 UNLV' are among the personalized messages seen around town."

"This program gives UNLV alumni, faculty, friends, and staff an ideal opportunity to show off their commitment to the university while adding a personal statement to their vehicles," explains Fred C. Albrecht, vice president for university and alumni relations.

The UNLV plate is sold for an additional $50 initially and $50 at renewal. UNLV receives $25 of the initial fee and $20 at time of renewal.

To download an application for a personalized plate, visit [www.dmvnv.com/plates要害.htm](http://www.dmvnv.com/plates要害.htm).

## Faculty Receive Awards, Grants for Student-Focused Teaching

Acknowledgment for UNLV’s top teaching professionals often comes in the form of an expression of sudden recognition on a bewildered student’s face or a word of thanks quickly shared between classes. Since 1998, thanks to funding from the UNLV Alumni Association, some of these extraordinary performers have received recognition of another kind.

Selected by a committee of alumni, three full-time faculty members are recognized at a luncheon each semester for the extra effort they invest in helping students learn. Faculty members are also invited to apply for funding of projects that extend special learning opportunities to students.

"This awards program recognizes academic achievement and commitment to student learning and development," says Barbara Cloud, former associate provost for academic affairs. She collected and forwarded the nominations and project proposals to the association committee.

"These awards have special meaning because of the unique relationship between UNLV and the university faculty, and we are grateful to the alumni for continuing to recognize the classroom achievements of our hard-working and devoted faculty," Cloud says.

"The 2003 Student Focus Award recipients are:

- Ralph Reynolds, educational psychology
- Louis Kavouras, dance
- Matt Tincani, special education

- Andy McNamara, theatre arts
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## About The Association

The UNLV Alumni Association was established in 1967 to provide volunteer leadership, support, and resources that enhance the UNLV community. The organization bestowed its first scholarship in 1973 and, to date, has contributed more than $5.9 million to the university in the form of scholarships, projects, major capital endowments, and program assistance.

The value of your UNLV diploma is maximized through your involvement and by giving something back to the institution that set you on your way. The association provides a significant and ongoing connection to the Rebel spirit.

Joining the association, either as an alum or a friend, is an easy and highly effective way of showing support for UNLV.

For membership information, call 702-895-3621 or e-mail alumni.relations@ccmail.nevada.edu.

## As Seen On TV

When the UNLV Alumni Association produced a new television advertising campaign this fall, some notable alumni answered the casting call. U.S. Congresswoman Shelley Berkley, '73 BA History, and former Clark County Sheriff Jerry Keller, '69 BS Biology, donned the Hey Reb mascots uniform in the commercials to encourage graduates to stay connected to the university through the association.

Shelley Berkley
Keller Class of 99

Alumni Association Member

Alumni Association Member
Elizabeth "Liz" Muto is having a banner year. The 23-year-old became a UNLV graduate in May, Miss Black Nevada in August, and Miss Black USA two weeks later. Muto is the first Nevadan ever to win any national pageant title—and she is determined to make the most of the opportunity.

"I definitely feel the weight of this crown," the Reno native says. "I think this says to the rest of the country that Nevada has so much to offer, and I feel that I need to pave the way for Nevadans. We are a force to be reckoned with and I'm proud to carry that banner."

Muto will carry that banner to the rest of the country as she embarks on a 100-city speaking tour this year. The tour, along with appearances at numerous charity and civic events, comes with the crown and other prizes, one of which is a full scholarship to a university of her choice. Muto plans to use the scholarship to attend graduate school at UNLV after she graduates. But for now, she’s concentrating on the 100-city speaking tour and her platform message.

"I have so many causes that I want to advocate," Muto says. "I’d like to develop a non-profit organization that provides accessible and affordable after-school activities for children. I want to help at-risk children stay off drugs and out of trouble. And I also want to work with children who have been abused, neglected, abandoned, or placed in the foster care system."

Muto knows that some may dismiss her platform as just typical beauty queen rhetoric. But she says her desire to serve as an advocate for children comes from her own life experiences, not from a need to impress judges. Abandoned at the Reno airport when she was just 10 days old, Muto is well aware that her life could have turned out much differently than it has.

"The two pilots who found me turned me over to Children’s Protective Services, and I was placed in foster care," Muto says. "But I was lucky. I was placed with my parents—Tom and Catherine Muto—who were foster parents at that time. They adopted me, loved me, and raised me."

Muto based the powerful monologue she presented for the talent portion of the pageant on her own experience as an abandoned child transformed by loving parents and on the story of child abuse victim Antwone Fisher. She had only a few days to write and practice the speech before delivering it before a packed auditorium. The lack of preparation time, however, was not her greatest concern; she was apprehensive about how her message would be received.

Alumna’s risky pageant performance makes her the first Nevadan to win the Miss Black USA crown

By Laurel Fruth / Photo by Aaron Mayes

"I was really selfish when I entered college," Muto says. "I was only interested in careers that would make me a lot of money and bring me a lot of prestige. But, as I learned more about myself, I discovered that I really do want to make a difference in the world." Muto plans to become active in politics and hopes one day to run for public office. But first she wants to ensure that her life story is heard.

Muto admits that affection for fellow contestants is something she is very familiar with. "The two Nevadans, I never would have seen a heavier girl or a girl with short hair. These women were beautiful," Muto says. "The Miss Black USA pageant is all about minority women who are politically astute and spiritually centered, and these values are reflected in all of the contestants. The beauty of the contestants radiated from the inside out."

Muto was so impressed by the women she met that she is forming a coalition with other contestants so they can present a united front on issues affecting African American and other minority women.

"The best thing about having a national title is that now people will listen to what I have to say," Muto laughs. "Once you take this crown and other prizes, one of which went to support Adoption Awareness, Muto says she'd love to speak as long as she could also actually run the SK event. "I can give a speech in shorts and a T-shirt," she proclaims in her most dignified and queenly voice.

"I knew I was going to say that my black parents abandoned me and my white parents came and saved me, so I didn't think I had a chance at winning the Miss Black USA crown."

With that in mind, she went for broke. Her risky performance earned the respect of the judges and her fellow contestants. "After my monologue, a number of women approached me and shared their stories with me. Realized that we all had taken different paths to get to where we were and that, for many, the path hasn’t been easy—yet here we were—strong, talented and intelligent women with so much to offer the world."

Muto admits that being an advocate for fellow contestants is something that pageant participants often proclaim but seldom feel. As first runner-up two years in a row in the Miss Nevada pageant, Muto says she is very familiar with the intensity that most candidates bring to such contests. The Miss Black USA pageant is different, she says, because judges place less emphasis on appearance and more on the goals and aspirations of the contestants. The beauty of the contestants radiated from the inside out."

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— Elizabeth Muto, '03 BS Business Administration
Perfect Pairing: Bryan Page, winemaker

Pairing fine wine with good food is just one component of a great dining experience, but for Bryan Page, '96 BS Hotel Administration, combining the two has turned out to be the main course in his career.

Now a formally trained chef, sommelier, and vintner, Page assigns dual credit for his love for the culinary life to his father, a former chef in Southern California, and to Julia Child, who he recalls watching on television as a child. At age 14, when other kids were still reading comic books, Page was experimenting with recipes from his mother's collection of cookbooks.

"I discovered that my mom owned the first book that Julia Child ever wrote and I ended up reading it cover to cover, copying everything that she did," Page says. "And then when my father retired and started cooking more at home, I started cooking more, too!"

Even though culinary school would have seemed the natural path for Page after high school, he enrolled at San Diego State University, majoring first in civil engineering, then psychology, business management, and child development. He never quite found the match he was looking for until he realized that his lifelong avocation should be his vocation. "Because I loved cooking so much I had always researched culinary schools, and when I finally decided to go, I knew it was the right choice," Page says. It was while attending the California Culinary Academy in 1991 that Page got his first taste for making wine. While the rest of his classmates honed their craft on the San Francisco culinary scene, Page spent most of the time in Napa Valley, interning at Wine Spectator magazine, Haven's Wine Cellars, and Truchard Vineyards — the latter of which he returned to after graduation to work as an assistant winemaker.

"Working on small projects like Truchard’s and Haven’s was amazing because I had the opportunity to learn all about the process," Page says. "I had my hands in everything — from crushing to cellar management to bottling. I absolutely loved it all." Despite his newfound affection for winemaking, Page didn’t abandon his formal education. He worked as a chef at some of Napa’s most renowned restaurants and cooked for some of the most respected names in the food and wine industry, including Baronesse Rothschild and Claude Tajinner.

But then a serious leg injury made standing for long periods difficult and cut short his career in the kitchen. "After my accident, I realized that I probably wasn’t going to be able to do what I’d spent my entire life training for," Page says. "So I figured that if I was going to have to be on the other side of the business, I was going to do it right. And that meant going to UNLV." Page was chef of the UNLV Wine Club and graduated magna cum laude with a emphasis in food and beverage management and entrepreneurship. But it was while teaching with UNLV’s summer studies program in Switzerland that Page’s dream job began to take shape. While traveling in 1997 through the St. Emilion and Pomerol districts of the famed Bordeaux region in France, Page tasted the wines that he hoped someday to emulate. Later that year, he returned to Napa Valley and turned his dream into reality.

"So far his passion is paying off. With his Page Wine Cellars now on its seventh harvest, Page has grown the production of his red Bordeaux-style table wine from a modest 60 cases in 1997 to approximately 850 cases today. In 2002, Wine Enthusiast magazine awarded his 1999 vintage a 93 rating, giving it the prized designation "Cellar Selection.""

"Sometimes I can't believe that I'm already on the fifth release of my own label," says Page, referring to his 2001 vintage that will be released this spring. "It's a lot of hard work but I can't imagine doing anything else. Cooking provides instant gratification, but winemaking requires a sustained level of heart and soul from the harvest until the time when the wine is ready to release." Recently engaged to be married, Page is now looking forward to a new chapter in his life, one that includes growing his winery to about 5,000 cases per year and making the best product he can. "My goal is to make amazing wine. I just want to continue doing this one thing and do it really well." — Gian Galassi

To learn more about Page Wine Cellars, visit www.pagewincellars.com.

Good Cop, Smart Cop: Dennis Cobb, deputy police chief

When Dennis Cobb became a police officer, he figured his work-related travel would be limited to policing city streets. But since joining the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department in 1983, the political science graduate has expanded his policing skills by visiting more than 20 countries as a Fulbright Fellow and a White House Fellow.

"My travels from the Gobi Desert to the jungles of Columbus have given me a broader perspective of the underlying similarities of policing around the globe," says Cobb, '79 BA Political Science. "There may be different laws, but when it comes down to it, a domestic violence call in Beijing isn’t all that different from one in Las Vegas."

Cobb now oversees more than 550 employees, including those in facilities management, motor vehicle fleet, communication, and information technology.

The overseas experiences gave Cobb a clear indication of the value of his education. "When we gathered for a photo of all the White House Fellows, I learned that I was the only one with just a bachelors’ degree and the only one who didn’t graduate from a place like Stanford or Harvard. It was exciting to realize what a good job UNLV had done to get me there.

"I think what I learned most as a student was how to satisfy my curiosity. It seems like liberal arts doesn't prepare you for the future, but it's much more to know things -- to know how to acquire knowledge. That's served me well." Cobb lives in Summerlin with his significant other, Colleen Sisley, '95 BA and MA Psychology, a marriage and family therapist.

— Cate Weeks

CLASS NOTES

1970s

Jesse Cardenas, '74 BS Political Science, is chairman and partner in the international practice group of Lewis and Roca law firm in Phoenix. A graduate of Stanford Law School, he previously served as law clerk to Robert F. Peckham, chief judge of the U.S. District Court of Northern California. He is president of the state’s Arizona-Mexico Commission and vice chairman of Greater Phoenix Economic Council. He resides in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, with his wife of 33 years.

Kenneth W. Fong, '78 BS Management, was elected the 2004 president of the Las Vegas chapter of the Institute of Real Estate Management.

A certified property manager, he is a partner manager of Fong and Associates, which manages shopping centers and offices in Nv. He holds an MBA from San Francisco State University.

1980s

Salvatore Semola, '81 BS Hotel Administration, is chief operating officer of Greektown Casino in Las Vegas. Previously he served in directed finance and business systems manager for Nevada Test Site contractors EG&G, REECo, and Bechtel Nevada. He and Denise Batschka, '81 BS Special Education, have five sons, Nicholas, Douglas, Thomas, Brian, and Evan.

1990s

Mark R. Vincent, '78 BS Accounting, is director of the finance business services department for the city of Las Vegas. Previously he served as director of finance and business systems manager for Nevada Test Site contractors EG&G, REECo, and Bechtel Nevada. He and Denise Batschka, '81 BS Special Education, have five sons, Nicholas, Douglas, Thomas, Brian, and Evan.
Animal Attraction: Sue Lynn Reif, zookeeper

A beloved 17-year-old diabetic cat named Mimi provides Sue Reif with all the animal companionship she needs—besides the animals she tends at work. Reif says, of how numerous pets of all species, Reif sees no need to do that. After all, what pet besides Mimi could compete with the wallabies, mute swans, exotic parrots, capuchin monkeys, capybaras, and African pygmy goats that Reif keeps? If she had to choose one, Reif says, of how she has put her UNLV psychology training to work in her various jobs in the animal world.

"I remember learning about conditioning and positive reinforcement in my classes," she says, of how her intelligence and cognition work with bottlenose dolphins. When that internship ended, she moved right into a humpback whale internship offered by Herman.

Returning to UNLV after nine months in internships, Reif was more certain than ever that she wanted to work with animals. After she graduated, Herman hired her to do field work on his Humphleback Whale Project. For three years during the winter months, Reif headed out in a boat to track the sales and collect data. How many whales in this pod? Where is this pod located? What kind of behavior is this pod involved in? She also did underwater videoography, recorded the whales' songs, and photographed their tail flukes. Humphleback whales can be identified by the unique patterns on the underside of their flukes—making it possible for those studying them to track migration and association patterns.

While there she also became involved with wildlife rehabilitation through the Monterey County SPCA. A non-profit organization devoted to marine conservation.

"I had to win him over when I was first working with him," Reif recalls. "He thought of himself as the head cow, and I was just the new guy on the block. I had to get him to respect me so that we would see me as the head cow. Now he lets me brush him and he loves his neck rubs."

Getting inside the zebu’s head to figure out how to get him to relax, but as just one example, Reif says, of how her University of Tulsa degree in wildlife management and animal behavior.

"Somebody has to give the animal a second chance," she says, of how her intelligence and cognition work with bottlenose dolphins.

--Diane Russell
President’s Message from page 2

pleased to find that I received favorable ratings on many items, the need for greater infrastructure support for students, faculty, and staff was identified. More specifically, improving our customer-service orientation in the business we conduct with students and providing greater internal support services for faculty are at issue. I want to assure the campus and the community that the challenges cited in both evaluations are being explored fully, taken seriously, and will be addressed. I have already initiated discussions about several of these points, and I consider myself accountable for setting concrete goals directed at producing timely and positive results. I am clear that a favorable evaluation does not release us to rest on our laurels; much work lies ahead, and I look forward to meeting with them the same vigorous, practical approach that I have traditionally adopted.

Additionally, I have outlined several goals that I plan to pursue in the coming years, and I would like to share them with you as well. These goals were included in my self-evaluation, which was part of the evaluation process, and, though many of you may be familiar with them, I believe they serve as a concise reminder of how I envision improving both UNLV’s visibility and activity. Thus, in the coming years, I plan to accomplish the following:

• Continue to pursue the planning for a capital campaign through the UNLV Foundation with the goal of significantly raising the bar for private giving among members of the UNLV extended family.

• Continue to be actively involved in shaping the campus physical master plan for future campus construction, expansion, renovation, and raising.

• Seriously undertake campus planning and preparations for the university’s 50th anniversary celebration in 2007-08.

• Move forward with the construction of the Science, Engineering, and Technology Building and the planning of other desperately needed campus construction projects, particularly Greenspun Hall and the Student Services Building.

• Continue progress toward our goal of becoming a Doctoral/ Research Exellence University (Research I) as defined by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

• Continue to seek tenants and partners for the Harry Reid Research and Technology Park.

• Continue to prepare for the implementation of the new admissions policy at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

• Continue to develop and build the professional programs on campus — the Dental School, the Law School, the School of Medicine, and others that are planned for the future, particularly in various health sciences disciplines.

• Continue to seek opportunities to work collegially and to seek collaborations with UCCSN partners.

• Continue to upgrade athletics competition and our commitment to enhancing student athlete academic success and graduation rates.

• Continue to identify community linkages and collaborative opportunities for the benefit of the entire community and state of Nevada.

I have also identified several of my ambitions as president that I will share. To offer some context, I should explain that I have a vision that children with disabilities have the right to be in the same classroom that they would if they did not have a disability. This benefits all children as they learn to accept people who are different from themselves. One of our goals is building a community of people who are accepting of diversity. The center’s inclusion policy dates back to about eight years ago. At that time, the Clark County School District selected it as the model for preschools serving children with disabilities. School district specialists assist the center in areas such as speech and language, occupational therapy, and mobility.

Learning Outside the Classroom

The center’s outdoor play area is both attractive and large. A small patio for each classroom can be closed off for small-group activities or opened so children can flow through the main courtyard. The path circles the courtyard, which is divided into smaller play zones with grassy areas, sand pits, art centers, and water features. A variety of attractive equipment helps children develop both fine and gross motor skills.

Because we want the playground to be a true learning experience for the children, UNLV, which is located just for the playground,” Lyons explains. “She does a complete daily lesson plan. On any given day, children may be able to choose from art and dramatic play opportunities as well as a large activity such as an obstacle course.

“We know that the children’s educational experience doesn’t begin and end in the classroom, and we wanted our new center to reflect that.”

A Community Project

The center was built with funds donated by the university to local community members. In addition to the fees paid by the families who use the center, its operations are supported by student government and the College of Education with some state and federal support.

"Without the support of Lynn Bennett and her late husband, William, this center never would have been possible,” Hall says. “Between their $5 million donation for this center and their previous donations that made possible the William Bennett Development Center here on campus, the Bennetts have had a tremendously positive impact on not only services provided to children, but also on the undergraduate and graduate education programs offered by our college. These contributions will be vital in assisting us in preparing the next generation of teachers for our community and our state.”

Retired Las Vegas pediatrician Joseph Lapsus and his wife, Joan, also donated thousands of dollars, Hall says. “Dr. Lapsus for many years has taken a sincere interest in the needs of the community’s children, and his contributions reflect that he is pleased to lend his support to this worthwhile project.”

Additional support has come from IBM, which donated Little Tykes Young Explorers computers, and from Mountain States Wholesale Nursery, which donated landscaping materials.

“I feel we’ve accomplished a great deal already and have a solid track record of providing an excellent educational experience for the community’s youngest,” Hall says, “but with this outstanding new facility we have our sights set even higher.”
UNLV's first football team took the field on Sept. 14, 1968, when the school was still known as Nevada Southern University. The Rebels were coached by UNR graduate Bill Ireland. Playing its opener at the old Cashman Field, NSU defeated St. Mary's College from California 27-20 before 8,000 fans. Ireland's squad was led by quarterback Bill Casey, who also punted for the Rebels in his one year with the team. The team would win its first eight games over teams such as Auzasa Pacific, San Francisco, and UC San Diego. The 69-0 drubbing of Cal Tech on Oct. 26 still stands as the biggest victory margin in UNLV history. Hopes for a perfect season were spoiled, however, in the season finale when Cal Lutheran came to Las Vegas and downed the upstart Rebels 17-13 on Nov. 23. The Rebels of 1968 wore a silver helmet with a logo shaped like a football filled with a Confederate Flag design. However, that decal was quickly replaced with a more appropriate emblem in time for the next season as NSU officially became UNLV in 1969. (Above) The inaugural team celebrates the end of the season with Mr. Las Vegas himself, Wayne Newton.
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