

Excellence in Education; A Spot Light On The Achievements of Dr. Lisa Muir

By Michael Triplett

Dr. Lisa Muir was born in Detroit. Her mother has a Masters in English, and her father is a physician. She started her studies to be a physician, following in her father's footsteps, at Michigan State University; however, by the second semester she had unofficially become an English major. Literature was something that she had always loved, and the decision to change majors was easily made, especially since she was never fond of needles or blood.

Dr. Ernest Schilinger, Muir's father, has always been an influential figure in her life. Muir believes him to be the smartest person she knows and says, "He's level headed, makes wonderful decisions, and I still ask his advice. He's also a very generous person and intelligent too." Muir would, instead, end up following in her mother's footsteps, and go into the teaching profession.

Muir left Michigan State University in 1979 and moved to Florida with her husband, Ken, now a professor of sociology at ASU. For two years Muir worked for a bank. She describes this as an eye-opening experience; Muir saw that she needed to finish her degree. In 1982 she graduated from Florida Atlantic University with a Bachelor of Arts in English. This degree, along with her love of literature, led to a Master of Arts in English from Virginia Tech, and, eventually, a Ph.D. in English from West Virginia University.

During her educational career she has won several awards including the Outstanding Part-Time Teaching Award for non-tenured faculty, from Appalachian State University; "Teaching At Its Best," from University of Wisconsin at Green Bay; and The Richard L. Hoffman Award for Outstanding Teaching as Graduate Teaching Assistant, from Virginia Tech.

Lisa Muir started teaching at the high school level, but moved to the college level to gain more autonomy in the classroom, thus enabling her to make more of a difference. Since then she has taught at Virginia Tech, West Virginia University, University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, Appalachian State University, and, currently Wilkes Community College.

Before arriving at Wilkes Community College, her teaching experience had been at the university level; however, after a conversation with Blair Hancock, Dean of Arts and Sciences, Muir thought, "This could be a very good thing," and came to Wilkes Community College to teach. It turned out, that the move was a good one. She is very happy here and enjoys teaching her students, as well as learning from them. Muir feels that her students still can offer new perspectives on works of literature she had not previously considered.

For those students who want to follow in Dr.

Muir's footsteps, she believes that an English instructor has to be a listener, above all, no matter his/her level of education. She captures her students' attention from the first class, in order to get them to understade the importance of the class from the very first day.

When not teaching, Muir works on her research with ethnic literature; in addition, she reads scholarly articles submitted to "College Literature" for publication, mainly works on ethnic literature. She is given six weeks to read an article and make the all-important decision whether the article should be published, be returned for revision, or denied publication. Muir also adds that "Being an academic is not exactly lucrative." All her work with the journals is non-paid; it is done solely for service. Muir also has a biographical piece forthcoming on Haitian American author Edwidge Danticat to be published in Harvard University Press' "African American National Biography," edited by Henry Louis Gates, the foremost scholar of African American Studies in the United States, and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. Her novel "Water Pressure" is in the final stages of completion. This work is set in the area around US Highway 421 and involves a small community college and a university in the mountains. Muir shared that her students can be the inspiration for her characters. So, this book, upon publication, may become a Wilkes Community College best seller.

When asked what one book Muir wanted all of her students to read, she responded, "I'm biased but I suppose that it would be something autobiographical and immigrant orientated, just so people could get an idea of where we've come as a country...It would only be one person's experience since people came from all over the place, but at least people would get an idea of what life used to be like and the struggles people went through in order to make what we call 'life' today."

In addition to being an exceptional educator, Muir is also deeply involved with her students through one-on-one conferences and with the college itself. She currently serves on the Faculty Senate, Professional Development Committee for the Quality Enhancement Plan, the Lecture Series Committee, and as an editor for the "Cougar Cry".

Current student Robyn Pickering, who has Muir for English 111, says, "Dr. Muir's classes are challenging." She also adds that she enjoys the class. Jessica McCard, also a student of Muir's, really enjoys the research involved with the class and thinks it is extremely beneficial for her future career. As a previous student of Muir's myself, I found the time she spent with her students in one-on-one conferences essential to the development of my papers and understanding of literature.

Absher WCC Bookstore

End of semester sale! 25% discount on all gift items, clothing and backpacks! December 14-20.

**Book
Buy
Back**

Three locations to serve our students!

WCC Main Campus and Ashe Campus WCC

Thursday, Friday, and Monday

December 14th, 15th, and 18th

Alleghany Center WCC

Friday, December 15th

