

Gardner-Webb University

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View of Homecoming

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EATING DISORDERS: The silent killers.....

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Special to the Pilot

Day in and day out, students traverse the Gardner-Webb campus, seeing the smiling faces of fellow students, never suspecting the possibility of a darkness and depression that can easily hide behind a well-placed smile.

This depression can manifest itself as an eating disorder, a disease that affects over five million American men and women. This figure may not seem terribly high until the realization hits that thousands of these people will die from the physical problems caused by these conditions.

Gardner-Webb students are no exception.

If anything, college is the perfect time for these deadly diseases to take hold in the lives of their victims, typically females.

Eating disorders are often used as a dysfunctional means of dealing with psychological stresses and problems.

Junior Brooke Clark, who at one point lost 25 pounds in two months, has used her own personal experiences with eating disorders to help others with similar problems. Clark attributes her past condition to a desire for control.

"It's not just a physical problem, but a mental one. If nothing's going right, I can at least control what I put in my body," said Clark.

For Clark, the decision was a willful progression that eventually defeated her initial desire for control

when the disease began to take over and consume her.

When asked about male's susceptibility to the disorders, Clark belies the common idea of females being the only victims.

"Men don't typically fall into the big categories, but any abuse of your body by denying it food is an eating disorder," said Clark. "A way guys do it is by ignoring their bodies need for healthy food in order to try to buff up."

Senior Summer Jeffcoat agreed, "Yes, while it is primarily a problem for females, men are certainly not exempt."

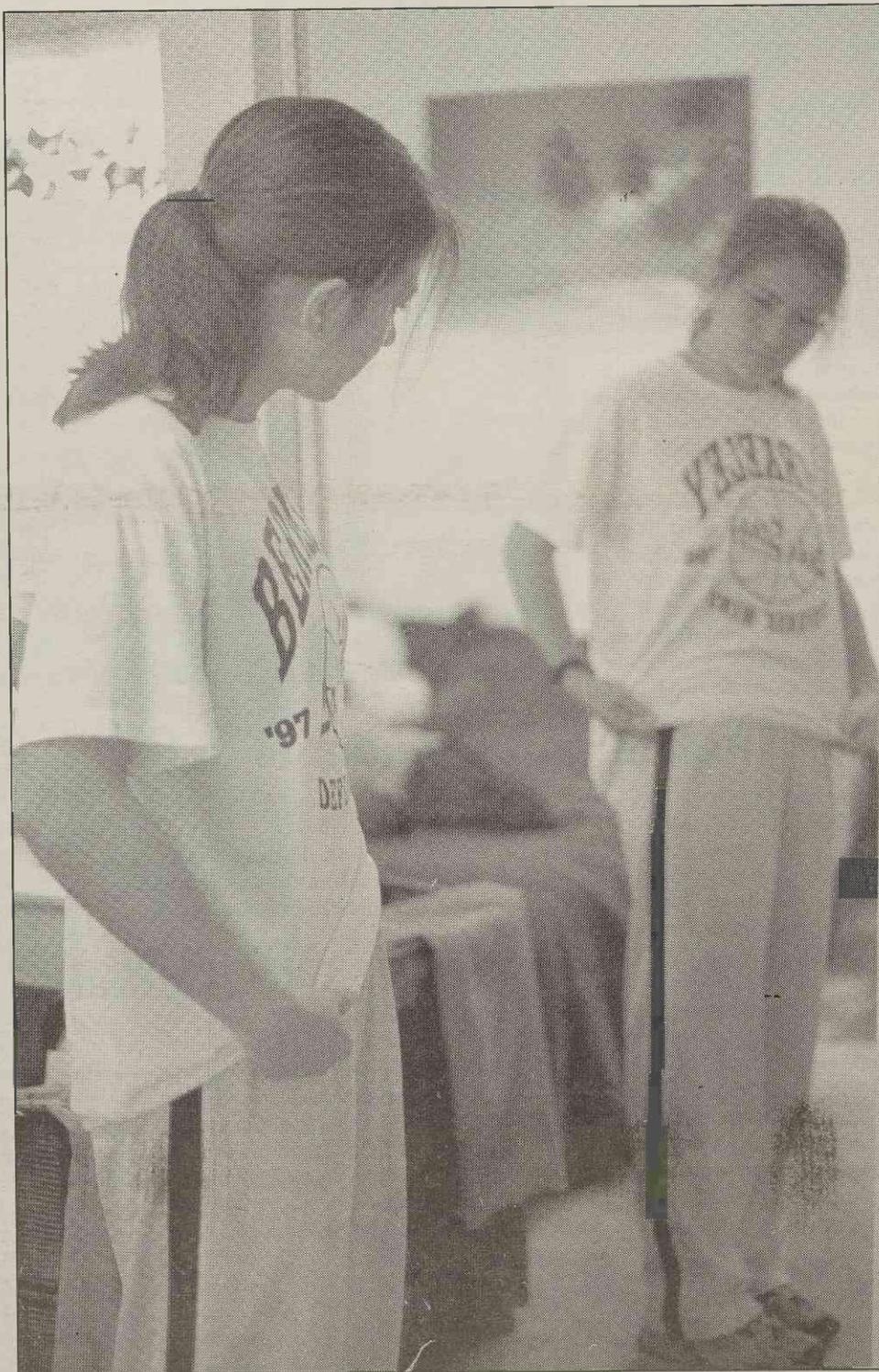
Senior Darin Deaton, when asked if men are plagued by eating disorders, said, "Why shouldn't it affect men? The disease is in no way gender specific. It may not be the same way girls face it, but it's still there.

"You have these guys who starve themselves and work out and take vitamins in order to maintain a healthy physique while more often than not they end up hurting themselves in the process," continued Deaton.

Clinically there are three types of diagnosed eating disorders. One is anorexia nervosa, a disorder in which preoccupation with dieting and thinness leads to excessive weight loss.

In bulimia nervosa frequent episodes of binge eating are usually followed by purging, or ridding the body of food. Binge eating disorder, which involves uncontrolled eating that is usually

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Pilot photo by Jessica Webb

Gardner-Webb junior, Brooke Clark, who at one point lost 25 pounds in two months, has trouble today looking at herself in the mirror.