

## News

# Mac wins university's 1st national championship

By Rebecca Clark  
Pilot editor

Gardner-Webb University made history last Thursday when Mac the Bulldog won the Mascot Nationals in Daytona, Fla., bringing home the first National Championship for Gardner-Webb since the university joined the Level 1 Division in 2003.

Fred Adkins, the life behind Mac's character, won first place in the 2008 NCA and NDA Collegiate

*Adkins won with a total of 8,780 points, beating out four other mascots.*

Cheer and Dance Competition with his skit that combined elements from the "Wizard of Oz" with making fun of the other competitors.

He won with a total of 8,780 points, beating out four other mascots. They were Sharky from Ha-

wai Pacific University, Sammy Bearkat from Sam Houston State University, NYU Bobcat from New York University and Ms. Wuf from North Carolina State University.

The skits are judged on a variety of factors including creativity,

pantomime, characterization and crowd response.

"I certainly got the best crowd response," Adkins said. "I got some of the highest scores."

Each mascot had 90 seconds to complete its skit, which included setting everything up and removing it from the stage.

Adkins said he had several people to thank for making the skit a winner, including friends and his dad, who helped with the props and flew from Virginia to watch the

competition.

The cheerleading competition will be featured on FSN on the April 26, and Adkins said in the past the network also played a clip of the mascot competition and the winning skit.

On a personal level, this has been a great achievement for Adkins.

"For me it was several years in the making," Adkins said. "I'm hoping it will lead to something bigger."

## Author brings tragic story to life at GWU

By Lauren Quesenberry  
Special to The Pilot

Word had been out for months. Books had been circulating around Gardner-Webb's campus. Expectations were high and on April 8 students began filing into Ritch Banquet Hall.

There were not enough chairs, so students found standing room against the walls. Chatter buzzed as the temperature of the room increased and Ravi Howard, author of "Like Trees, Walking," entered.

Dr. Christopher Davis, a professor in the English department, introduced the 33-year-old author. A native of Montgomery, Ala., Howard now lives in Mobile, with his wife.

He graduated from Howard University with a BA in

journalism before attending UVA, where he earned an MA in creative writing.

"Like Trees, Walking" is a novel written about an actual lynching that took place in 1981 in Mobile. The book explores issues such as death, faith, and justice—issues that Howard prepared himself to address with this young adult audience.

An audience of 230 students filled a room with 196 chairs.

"Well, this is easily the biggest crowd I've had," began Howard.

He went on to explain his passion for writing and his belief that "fiction is an interesting way to examine history."

Howard is a strong believer in fiction-writing from history. With fiction one "can focus on stories from a grass-

roots level." Howard strives to represent real people at a real time and place.

Howard opened his own copy of the book and began reading the prologue. His voice echoed around the room as the student body listened. It was obvious that the depth of attachment to the words Howard spoke was profound.

The author allotted the rest of the hour to questions from the students. A student asked about the origin of the title of the book.

Howard replied that the title comes from a verse in the Bible, Mark 8:24, when a blind man opens his eyes and says to Jesus, "I see men like trees walking." Howard explained that this is like the "intermediate step in a healing process."

He went on to say that

the book is about a community in a time of healing. The death count from Sept. 11, 2001, does not include the number of people affected by that tragedy. Neither does a death simply occur. Everyone is affected and there is a necessary healing process during that time.

In an earlier interview with a class, Howard explained that the actual lynching of Michael Donald occurred when he was in first grade. He remembered a distinct fear that captured many parents concerned for their own children's safety.

Howard does some freelance work, guest teaching and book reviews. He is currently working on his next novel which will, in part, focus on race relations from post World War II to the Montgomery bus boycott.

Carolina Panthers.

It was during his four years with NFL films that he began work on "Like Trees, Walking."

His biggest fear was that people would not think his story sounded authentic. But authenticity came with drafts, lots of drafts, he said, four years of them.

It was important to Howard that he give the readers space to make up their own minds about the lynching.

To aspiring writers of fiction, he warns against putting too much of your own voice in the story.

"[It's] important to do editorial work and try to explain without explaining. Take a poetry course, playwriting courses," he suggested. "Tell everything through dialogue, and see how language works. There is always a temptation to explain a story to a reader as opposed to being able to illustrate."

As for Mobile, it is evolving into a place where racial tension is being talked about. Redevelopment is occurring in the rundown neighborhood where Donald was hung. The street's name was changed to Michael Donald Avenue.

## Weather puts kibosh on Beep Ball game

The annual Beep Ball game, scheduled for April 4, was not played because of rain.

Parrish Walsburger, disability specialist for the Noel Program, looked on the positive side, though, focusing on the fact that it was the first time in 16 years that the

game was cancelled.

She said that, due to time constraints, the game can't be rescheduled for this semester.

She hopes that it can be played in the fall semester. If not, there's always next spring's Beep Ball game to look forward to.

## Huber to conduct premier of original work 'Beowulf'

By Christopher Shaver  
Pilot staff writer

Monday evening will mark the world premier of "Beowulf," which was written by Gardner-Webb senior Seth Huber, who will also conduct the piece.

Huber said he wanted to write a composition based around a story, in order to bring abstract ideas to life through music. Since he loved the story of Beowulf, he decided that he would base his senior thesis around telling the poem through music. The piece is based around five movements that highlight the premise of the literature.

"There's no accurate way to do 'Beowulf,' since there was no orchestra then," Huber said. "So I tried to find the happy medium between the primitive sound and what we have in modern music." "Beowulf" is the oldest English epic poem, dating back to between the 8th and 11th centuries. It's based around a Scandinavian hero who saves the Danes from a monster named Grendel, becomes a king and dies in a fight with a dragon.

A film based around the poem was released in 2007, and Huber said he wanted to make sure his piece was set apart from the movie.

"I didn't like the movie," Huber said. "It wasn't true to the original poem. The movie's music also had a Middle Eastern feel, which I didn't think was appropriate, since the poem is set in

Scandinavia."

Dr. Patricia Sparti, head of the GWU music department, has nothing but praise for Huber's work.

"It's an incredible composition," Sparti said. "The way he wrote it is very sophisticated. Every section has something wonderful to play, and the orchestra is very impressed with him."

The premier will be Huber's first time conducting the 60-piece orchestra. Although he said he is a little nervous, he is confident in his material. The concert will also feature senior Grace Whiteside, who will play her violin before Beowulf. The concert will start at 8 p.m. in Dover Theater.

"My hope is that it will be submitted to composition competitions and it'll go on for other orchestras to play," Sparti said. "I'm also hoping we'll have a packed house April 21."

In addition to Huber's piece, these other works will be performed:

\* Mozart Violin Concerto 1st Movement, featuring Grace Whiteside, GWU senior violinist and championship swimmer.

\* Zabel Harp Concerto featuring 16-year old Shelby sensation Hannah Blalock, who has already been a featured soloist at Carnegie Hall.

\* Mendelssohn Violin Concerto featuring Charlotte Symphony Concertmaster/GWU violin Professor Calin Lupanu.

\* Shostakovich Festive Overture

## The man and story behind the tragic story

By Lauren Taylor  
Pilot staff writer

In a town where racial barriers towered high over the citizens of Mobile, Ala., the modern-day lynching of a young black man chilled the blood of people all over the United States.

The event is immortalized by Ravi Howard in his book "Like Trees, Walking."

The story recounts the actual 1981 lynching of Michael Donald by the Ku Klux Klan, and is told through a fictitious teenager working in a funeral home in Mobile.

Coming from a grassroots standpoint, the novel shows how tragedy permeates a society—harming people in unexpected ways.

Having grown up in Alabama, Howard was able to blend local color and dialogue in the historical fiction novel, using characters he based on actual acquaintances. His uncle was a driver for a funeral home, so Howard has first-hand experiences into the story.

Howard also met others during his college education whom would add breadth to his novel.

While attaining his bachelor's degree in journalism from Howard University, a historically black school in Washington D.C., he met people who had come of age during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. From these people he was able to draw inspiration for many of his writings.

"It was interesting to see where they got that experience," Howard said.

With his interest ignited, he began to explore what contributions he could make to the movement that, to many people, is still moving. During grad school at the University of Virginia, he wrote a short-story version of "Like Trees, Walking," winning the Hurston/Wright Award for College Writers.

Even though the Donald tragedy took place more than 27 years ago, the imprint of its horror stuck with Howard, only a child at the time.

"It happened when I was in first grade...I heard of it from my parents and family members being afraid," Howard recalls. "The Klan was sued and one of the members executed."

He says that once a per-

son starts to write consistently, he begins to examine his experiences and flush them out onto paper.

Howard's journey to becoming a writer began when he was in the seventh grade, thanks to invigorating language labs in school.

When he entered high school, the faculty advisor for the school's literary magazine encouraged Howard's writing. Though the emphasis in many schools is often placed on math and science, Howard says that writing is just as important.

"Students don't really look at writing as something that will prepare you for the future with standardized tests," Howard says.

But he insists that it does because once he entered the job force, he found that writers were in high demand—even in the National Football League.

Howard worked for NFL Films as a producer from 2001-2005. He won a sports Emmy for his work on HBO's "Inside the NFL."

He learned to work with sound, music and video editors to put together pieces for various teams, including the

## Student designs project that should raise literacy level in region

By Patrice Blackmon  
Pilot staff writer and  
Nancy-Pat Dire  
Pilot advisor

A brainstorming session, a \$1,000 grant and some dedicated Gardner-Webb University students and staff members mean improved literacy for children in the region.

Joseph Hamby, a junior majoring in public relations and minoring in religion, is the creator and driving force of a project called "Let's Read Together."

"This project is designed to strengthen the partnership between Gardner-Webb University and our community partner, KidSenses Interactive Museum," Hamby said. "Through this, children throughout Cleveland and Rutherford counties, along with other surrounding counties, will have the opportunity to come to the museum and interact with GWU volunteers in an initiative to promote literacy for the children, and to promote parent involvement in the literacy process."

Hamby's wanted to create a program to break the cycle of illiteracy in the seven counties surrounding KidSenses, where, he said, 30 per-

cent of adults are functionally illiterate. The museum is located in Rutherford County.

He said that passion was his motivation for creating the program.

"A passion of a student, the passion of a staff member, and the willingness of several people to make Gardner-Webb a university that is invested in the needs of its community," said Hamby.

"The truth is that Gardner-Webb certainly could have gone on without a program like this; however, our community couldn't. The eagerness of individuals like Sandy Hammett, Dr. Susan Mahan, Julia Phillips, Dr. Cindy McKinney and Dr. Sheila Ingles is what really led me to pursue such an endeavor."

Sandy Hammett is the GWU director of volunteerism and Julia Phillips is the literacy director for KidSenses. Hamby said he and Hammett brainstormed program options in the creation of "Let's Read Together," which is branch of the KidSenses program "The Littlest Readers."

That wasn't the end of the process, however.

"After hammering out the program details, the main focus was to develop a strategy, list of goals,

a proposed budget, along with the necessary grant paperwork," Hamby said. "After that it was approximately a month before we heard the outcome of the grant proposal."

We received a \$1,000 grant from the Jimmy & Rosalyn Carter Foundation to fund the program."

Students from McKinney's Classroom Management class and Ingles' Practicum class planned the different activities and books that would be used.

This was part of their coursework and an opportunity for them to gain experience by applying skills learned in the courses.

All the hard work culminated with the first "Let's Read Together" literacy event, which took place March 18 at KidSenses. There were 159 children and 145 adults at the event.

In addition the parents received an informational brochure that gave them pointers on being involved in their child's literacy process.

"I'm excited to see the impact that it will make on the children, on the parents, and on the community," Hamby said.

Student volunteers:  
From Dr. McKinney's Classroom Management class:  
Whitney Beachum, Donna Cha-

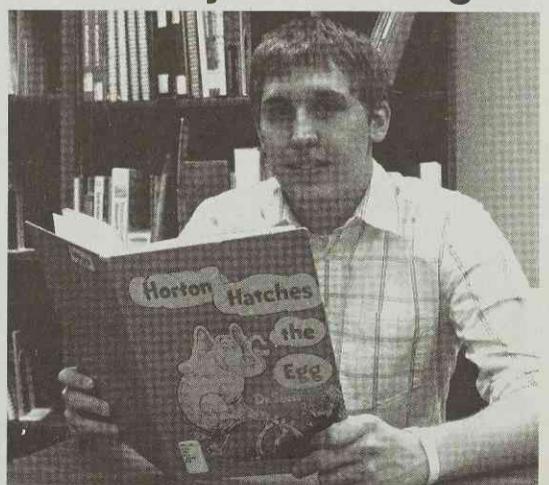


Photo by Tyler Kueifer

Joseph Hamby designed a program with KidSenses museum to teach parents how to increase the amount their children read.

tham, Lindsay Harmon, Sally Holifield, Nathan Mellon, Amanda Oliver, Lindsay Palmer, Chasity Sims and Jessica Spurling  
From Dr. Ingles' Practicum class:

Ruthie McCall, Rebekah Hillenrow, D.J. Hamrick, April Shelton, Natalie Smith, Meg Barrow, Allison Hursey, Blair Early, Sarah Owens, Heather Russell and Anna Hardee