

FEATURES



ECSU student Connie Moore proudly holds her sleeping daughter Else in Johnson Hall. Moore works in the Department of Language, Literature and Communications.



Lisa Doxey, a senior art major poses with her daughter Catherine on the grounds of the ECSU campus.

Student moms cope with heartaches, joy

By Ginger Blount and Cathy McGee

Sunday evenings are especially hard for ECSU junior Crystal Fuller. When she returns to the campus from Creswell and her parents drop her off at Doles Hall, she must walk to the dorm with the sounds of her two-year old son's crying ringing in her ears.

"It makes me want to cry, too," said Fuller. "All I can do is give Jamelle to my mom and walk away."

Welcome to the world of the student mom. Student mothers on ECSU's campus face a special set of challenges and heartaches in their struggle to get an education and be good mothers to their children.

Separated from their children during the week mothers must constantly worry about the child's well-being. If a child is sick and mothers have to go home, there are missed classes. The commutes to and from home every weekend make it more difficult to get school work done, and even to find time to relax. Since student moms have only limited time with their children, they must also deal with guilt when they take time out to do things for themselves—like studying.

"It is almost impossible for me to spend a great deal of time with my children," said Gayle Hassell, an ECSU junior who works at Cato's in Elizabeth City. "I feel really bad about it."

Hassell's grandmother keeps her children during the week. "The first two months after my baby was born, it was hard to come back to school and leave her," said Senior Cipporah Turnage. "I was afraid she would forget me."

Student mothers say the pressure of worrying about their children and missed classes can become especially intense.

Junior Kim Bryan said, "The only problem I can think of that I encounter is when my baby is sick. I have to stay home with him so I'm not able to go to class." Bryan, whose aunt cares for her child, added, "I used to feel bad about leaving my baby, but I know he's being well taken care of."

According to a recent Compass Survey, 82% of student mother's interviewed leave their children with a family member while attending school. Survey results showed that students leave their children with a family member at least eight hours a day, between three and five days a week—depending on whether the student lives on or off campus.

All of the moms interviewed said they would use a campus day

care facility, and that they could afford to pay between ten and twenty dollars a week.

"I feel the cost for a day care facility should be included in tuition," said Hassell, "for those mothers who wish to use it."

The majority of the respondents also said they didn't think the University should allow student mothers/fathers to keep a child in campus housing—despite the pain of separation from their child.

Explained Andrea Collins, "If there was a designated dorm for mothers and children the University should allow them to stay. But I don't think the dorms are of proper environment for students. I certainly don't want my child in one."

"The University should not allow student mothers/fathers to keep a child in campus housing unless there was a designated dorm just for mothers and children which also had a play area," said Margaret Irving, a junior with three children.

Despite the heartaches of being student mothers, most mothers say that they still find time to experience the joys of parenting.

"Samarri brought so much joy into our lives," said Cipporah, "and I thank God every day for her. I ask that He gives me the knowledge to understand the things that she may ask, and the strength to carry them out."

Teaching students is the 'joy of life' for Evelyn Johnson

By Florencestine Jones

"Read the poem on the wall, honey," said Evelyn Johnson, retired music professor from ECSU. "And pick out the misspelled words."

The poem, written by one of Miss Johnson's former students, praises her dedication to teaching and her caring attitude toward her students. The interviewer squinted at one of the words. "That word doesn't look right."

"Well how do you spell it? If you don't know, you get the dictionary and look it up." And Miss Johnson sat her interviewer down and together they looked the word "abhor."

"Now," she said, "write the definition down and don't forget it." And with a smile she added, "Lord, Florence, I'm teaching all over again."

Miss Evelyn Johnson, who retired from ECSU in 1975 after teaching for 42 years, still retains her sense of humor, her love of life, and her dedication to excellence in teaching.

In 1933 when Miss Johnson first began teaching at ECSU, the school was much different from what it is today.

"The school was very poor when I first started working here," she recalled. "It could have been lost but for our good presidents who kept it going."

"At one time, a black student had nothing to look forward to but teaching," she said. "But today black students do not have to be limited to teaching. Today there are many more opportunities for qualified black individuals. The dream of Martin Luther King is being unfolded, but rather slowly."

Ms. Johnson said when she first started teaching she had only been out of college three years. "That meant I had students who were older than I

was."

Although retired, Johnson is still actively involved with the Evelyn A. Johnson Community Singers.

"She rehearses, supports all functions financially, and offers moral support," says Dr. Glenda Davis, a soprano in the group. "She helps to resolve any kind of problems and through her contacts, we get the various engagements that we get. Her influence is still very much a part of the entire group. She's standing over us like a guardian angel. Teaching is the joy of her life."

Originally formed as the Bicentennial Community Choir, the name was changed to the Evelyn A. Johnson Singers, in honor of its founder, in 1976. The choir certainly lives up to its avowed purpose—to "render service to the local community." The singers perform annual concerts to benefit churches, recruit students, sponsor the Hugh Cale Memorial Scholarship Fund, the Catherine Cultural Arts Studio Cash award, as well as serve as an outlet for talented ECSU faculty and students.

The choir also was founded to "perform music from the standard choral repertoire with emphasis on the preservation of the Negro spiritual," according to Ms. Johnson, who added, "I enjoy standard choral literature, symphonic music, folk music, Negro spirituals, and art songs created by black composers." Johnson said she prefers the term "African-American" to black, "because we are classified from the land which we come. For example, Germans come from Germany and Italians from Italy. And African Americans come from Africa."

In addition to her interest in music, Ms. Johnson is also an author; she



Photo by Jackie Rountree

Ms. Evelyn Johnson, professor emerita at ECSU and founder of the Evelyn Johnson Community Singers, relaxes on the porch of her home.

wrote a history of ECSU—a work commissioned by the University's board of trustees and then Chancellor Marion D. Thorpe.

Even though Evelyn Johnson has entered her golden years, she still lives an activity-filled life. Her hobbies include opera, reading, dramatics, writing, attending football games and giving parties.

"I attend every homecoming," she said. "And afterwards I have an open house."

Ms. Johnson's guests include former students and choir members.

Despite her numerous accomplishments and honors—which include an honorary doctorate in music and a lifetime member of the ECSU General Alumni Association, Ms. Johnson envisions many more years of living—and sharing her talents.

"There's a lot to look forward to," she says, with her warm smile. "I want to continue to work with people who want to get things done."

Vikings' top scorers stress 'team concept'

By Cindi Blount

Although Tara Jackson and Demetrius Rowe are the leading scorers for the Lady Vikings, both players display a refreshing humility regarding their success.

"Togetherness helps us win," said Jackson, a junior accounting major from Wilmington, N.C. "Scoring is important, but it isn't everything. The contribution of all the teammates is what helped us win, not just my scoring."

"Part of our success is our improved leadership and playing together as a team. All of our roles are equally important."

Demetrius Rowe

"Part of our success is our improved leadership and playing together as a team," said Rowe, a junior criminal justice major from Richmond, Virginia. "All of our roles are equally important."

Rowe seems more comfortable talking about things she has gained personally from the sport than her demonstrated prowess on the court.

"I've gained self-discipline and working well with others," she said. Rowe said she has no problem balancing her athletics and academics "because both of them require discipline."

Rowe plans to attend law school after graduation from ECSU. She said her hobbies are "listening to music, studying, and participating in sports."

Jackson said her participation in

sports has "helped to build my character, and given me will power and determination." Jackson was quick to point out a practical benefit of athletics as well. "It's paying for my college," she said.

Jackson plans to attend graduate school in accounting. She said her hobbies are "basketball, softball, outdoor sports, I enjoy working with children and helping others."

Both Jackson and Rowe cited their parents as having had the most positive influence on their lives.

"My parents taught me to deal with life and adversities," Jackson said.

Jackson, whose mother recently had a heart transplant, said she had learned a lot about "coping with adversity" from that experience.

"I admire my mom because she was such a strong person in overcoming her illness."

Rowe said she lost her mother when she was young and was raised by her father. "I thought I missed something by not having a mother figure," she said. "My father played a mother and father role."

"My older sister was a good feminine role model," Rowe added.

Coach Alvin Kelly said he was pleased with his two top scorers; however, he, too, stressed the importance and value of the overall team. "We try to get five or six players in double figures each game," he said, "to avoid having the two high scorers closely guarded. The team concept is most important."

Viking center Ericka Ruffin said she was proud of Rowe and Jackson. "Their high scoring motivates us," she added.

Rowe said that she doesn't think the Lady Vikings get the support the team deserves from the other students and community.

With characteristic pride and determination, she added, however, "But we don't let lack of support affect our team's performance."