

# THE PENDULUM



## WHAT NEXT?

Wave of new campus facilities reflects Elon's focus on development

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FOR YET ANOTHER SUMMER, Elon's expansion efforts have carried on at breakneck speed. A recent crop of sizable donations and a need for additional undergraduate housing led to the construction of new buildings all across campus.

See **EXPANSION** | pg. 5

## ELON FRESHMAN PERSEVERES despite life's obstacles

From a young age, Elon student has faced down daunting responsibility and turmoil

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Freshman Mason Curtis' earliest childhood memories were changing his younger sister's diapers, unpacking groceries and doing laundry. He was 5 years old.

Instead of being in kindergarten and learning the alphabet, Mason had to step up and care for his 2-year-old sister, Lillie Potter, and himself because of their mother's substance abuse issues.



Mason Curtis

In their trailer home in Boone, North Carolina, Mason felt obligated to care for Lillie while their mother, Suzanne Potter, would leave them alone for days or weeks at a time battling alcohol and drug use.

"I was going to try my best to help my sister out," Mason said. "It sounds crazy even to me but the love I

had for my sister is what kept me going in that situation."

Mason's father, Richard W. Curtis, left him and Suzanne when he was only 3 years old. Mason says he could not move in with Richard since he was not financially stable enough to support him. Experiences like these affected Mason negatively in some of his mental, academic and social abilities. But they also helped him grow and become responsible at an early age. Mason never thought these experiences would help him become determined to better his life and overcome the hardships he was facing.

Twelve years later he was accepted to Elon University, his top choice school, as a part of the class of 2022 Odyssey Program. This is one of the most competitive and highly selective merit-based programs for incoming freshmen at Elon. This year, there are 38 new members in the Odyssey program.

"I am very surprised that I am here," Mason said. "When I was a kid, the environment and atmosphere that I grew up in set me up for failure."

### Growing up in Boone

Because of Suzanne's inability to care for him, by the age of 8 Mason had lived with his paternal grandfather, Richard F.



THE ENVIRONMENT AND ATMOSPHERE THAT I GREW UP IN SET ME UP FOR FAILURE.

**MASON CURTIS**  
FRESHMAN

Curtis, returned to Suzanne's for a bit after she had been to rehabilitation and then moved in with maternal grandmother, Beverly Church.

He describes his childhood as "chaotic." "I didn't have the opportunity to go to school," Mason said. "I was enrolled in an elementary school but I couldn't go because I was obligated to take care of my little sister."

Every move for Mason meant a new elementary school and lifestyle. It wasn't until 2009 when he decided to move in with his paternal aunt and uncle, Robin Curtis and Jim Alexander, in Atlanta. He considers this the best decision of his life besides coming to Elon.

See **CURTIS** | pg. 7



**NEWS • PAGE 4**  
Political science professor breaks down Manafort trial



**SPORTS • SECTION A**  
The Fall Sport Preview takes a look at what to expect this coming season