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'Unsung hero' earns national recognition

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'UNsung HERO' EARNS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

AS A STUDENT AT FURMAN, Steven Weeks '08 once received the "Unsung Hero Award" at the spring awards banquet for his behind-the-scenes contributions to campus activities and commitment to enhancing student life.

Fast forward to the fall of 2012. There Weeks was again, receiving another "Unsung Hero" award. Only this time he was honored on a national level.

Weeks and four others were recognized by Communities in Schools, a leading early intervention/dropout prevention program with close to 200 affiliates nationwide. The organization's website says the Unsung Heroes Award goes "to site coordinators who demonstrate an unwavering commitment to students most in need of integrated services. With acts of love and transformation, these Unsung Heroes are the best in the country at what they do."

Weeks, a site coordinator at Greer (S.C.) Middle School, works to identify at-risk students and ensure that they have the academic and emotional support they need. The Communities in Schools affiliate in Greenville nominated him for the award. He and the other winners, from Florida, New Mexico, Texas and Washington, were feted at a dinner in Arlington, Va., in September.

Weeks says winning the award was "a shock. You don't really aim for rewards in the nonprofit field, but it was a huge honor."

The Communities in Schools website says, "It seems Steven Weeks was born with the helping-youth gene deeply embedded in his DNA. Steven works tirelessly with more than 40 at-risk students. His passion to see youth overcome obstacles, be empowered, and achieve in life means building strong relationships, learning what each student's unique needs are, and providing the services that remove barriers standing between the student and high school graduation."



Weeks does a little of everything for the students he works with, serving as a father figure, tutor, college advisor, guidance counselor, mentor and friend.

He makes home visits to better understand the challenges students and their parents face, and he follows up with former students to check on their progress.

"Some of my students have truly depressing home situations," he says. "They are often moving around, and at least 90 percent are on free and reduced lunch. We work to teach them to become confident and self-motivated. We tell them to aim really high.

"You see yourself in the kids sometimes and really care about their futures. These are my kids."

Weeks earned his Furman degree in philosophy and religion and considered becoming a youth minister before deciding he'd prefer to work in a school setting. He joined the Greer Middle staff in August 2008.

Amy Clifton Keely, after-school programs director for Communities in Schools in Greenville, told *The Greenville News*,

"Steven is always willing to take on whatever role or responsibility he needs to take on to help a child become successful. He really just doesn't look at failure as an option for the kids that he serves. He really believes in them and does whatever he can to help them believe in themselves."

Nancy Cooper, longtime coordinator for volunteer services at Furman, agrees. "Steven has a servant's heart," she says. "He always puts others first and is always the first person to help someone. He never wants to be in the spotlight, but he is always shining the light on others."

Adapted from an article by Kate Hofler Dabbs '09 for the Alumni Association website. Photo courtesy Amy Clifton Photography.



07

Margarete Allio graduated from Charleston (S.C.) School of Law in May and was sworn into the South Carolina Bar in November. She has joined the Charleston office of Stasmayer, Inc.

Courtney Thomas completed her Ph.D. in chemistry at UCLA and is starting a post-doctoral fellowship at the Ecole Polytechnique Federale in Lausanne, Switzerland.

MARRIAGES: **Ashely Hogge** and Brett Schneider, October 6. They live in Portland, Ore.

Shannon Stark and **Bryan Taylor**, June 23. They live in Phoenix, Ariz. Bryan

is a management consultant with Deloitte, and Shannon is pursuing a Ph.D. in clinical psychology at Arizona State University.

Laura Wall and Brooks Lindsey, September 29. They live in Macon, Ga.

BIRTH: **Sam** and **Linda Ketsche Williamson**, a son, Bennett Mozley, May 25, Greenville.

08

THIS YEAR IS REUNION!

Maryanne Henderson of Durham, N.C., is pursuing Master of Divinity and Master of Social Work degrees in the dual degree

graduate programs at Duke University and the University of North Carolina.

09

Jenna Buckman is one of three recipients of the 2012 Schermerhorn Scholarship presented by the University of Texas Southwestern School of Health Professions in Dallas. Recipients of the \$500 award are selected based on academic excellence, leadership and volunteer work. Jenna is studying physical therapy.

Matt Casella, a first-year chemistry teacher at Travelers Rest (S.C.) High School,

is one of two recipients of the 2012 Childers Education Foundation Teaching Excellence Award from Furman. The \$1,500 award recognizes effective teaching and dedication and commitment to the teaching profession. It was established by **Alfred G. Childers '80** and his wife, **Marybeth Bunting '80 Childers**.

Eric Chamberlin passed the Tennessee Bar exam and has been licensed as an attorney in the state. He is general counsel for Cumberland Medical Center, an acute care hospital in Crossville.