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For Immediate Release

Campbellsville University students come together for mass media ‘extravaganza’

By Lacy Mudd, student news writer

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. – What is the Derby Rose Gala? Many Campbellsville University students said they had never heard of it, or if they had were not sure of what it was. This year CU’s Department of Mass Communication plans to change that. The department is getting together to provide the maximum coverage of this year’s event.

For the fourth year in a row, CU will be hosting the Derby Rose Gala, which is an important scholarship fundraising event for the institution. Over the last few years, the university has raised close to \$65,000 for scholarships through the Derby Rose Gala.

The gala entails an evening of elegant dress and a meal provided by the university for various sponsors, donors and alumni.

Members of the Advancement Board, Sara Curry, Betty Hord, Karen Patton and Bill Chandler, all of Campbellsville, and Gwinn Hahn of Mt. Washington, are in charge of planning the gala, with assistance from Paula Smith, CU’s director of alumni relations.

With the guidance of mass communication professors, tasks have been assigned to students from every area of the department. Students in the areas of public relations, journalism, radio and television broadcast, photography and social media will be in charge of covering every aspect of the event. Students will be greeting guests, doing interviews, recording footage, taking photographs and more.

Dr. Keith Spears, vice president for regional and professional education, who teaches broadcast classes, said, “We look for a real world reporting experience to culminate the semester.”

Spears said Campbellsville University president Michael V. Carter mentioned the Derby Rose Gala event, and the idea grew.

“It is perfect for multiple reporting opportunities and one that gives a sense of the professional convergence taking place in mass media today,” Spears said.

Stan McKinney, lead professor of the mass communication department, has high hopes for this project.

“This is a team effort. Covering the news today is also a team effort. It really pleases me to see so many faculty and students working together for a common purpose. All of us in the Department of Mass Communication believe in real-world assignments. Covering the gala is a natural way for students to combine their talents to produce something that I believe will be remarkable,” McKinney said.

The evening will start with a glamorous feel as guests step onto the maroon carpet (CU’s colors are maroon and gray) outside Winters Dining Hall, where the dinner will be taking place.

Photography and journalism students will operate as reporters and photographers taking pictures of the guests and asking questions for stories. It is the public relations students’ job, under the direction of Dr. Russell Barclay, visiting professor in public relations, to make sure the student media have what they need.

“My students will greet arriving guests and dignitaries. They will handle getting them through the photography, and try to determine which among them seems willing to speak on camera and to our print reporters,” Barclay said.

Dr. Thomas Jeffrey, instructional technologist and assistant professor, is requiring students in his social networking class to provide coverage of the gala through social media.

They will be using various social networking sites online such as Facebook and Twitter by uploading photos, updating statuses and “tweeting.”

“It will allow us to involve family and friends, bringing others into the event who can’t participate,” Jeffrey said.

There will be a media room set up where the students will be able to upload their photos and submit information providing instantaneous coverage.

TV and radio broadcast students will give a “play by play” of the night’s festivities, the event will be broadcast live starting around 5:45 p.m. on WLCU-FM 88.7. Scheduled to head the coverage on radio will be Kevin Thomas, a junior from Elizabethtown, Ky.; Matt Rafferty, a freshman from Campbellsville, Ky.; Austin Yates, a sophomore from Campbellsville, and Marc Garza, a senior from Othello, Wash.

Michael McBride, a senior from Visalia, Calif., and Kelly Moyer, a sophomore from LaGrange, Ky., will be the hosts for the evening, and Matt Schmuck, a sophomore from Campbellsville, and Ellen Hittson, a senior from Bowling Green, Ky., will serve as reporters on the TV end of the event.

Hittson and Harry Haynes, a sophomore from Grayson, Ga., will be shooting footage for an eight-minute documentary about the project.

“My job for the documentary is to show how the mass communication students are coming together to produce coverage of the Derby Rose Gala. I’m supposed to get those shots about the struggles of the students and how they get through those situations. This is a huge honor that they put such a project in my hands,” Haynes said.

Most students will complete their onsite assignments before the dinner starts at 7 p.m. outside the dining hall. Only a few students will gather information and footage from inside.

But for students, the work doesn't end at the close of the event. During classes the next day, they will be choosing which photos to use, composing their stories, editing and getting all the material ready to be broadcast and for the special edition of the "Campus Times," the university's newspaper.

"I know of no other university that has done anything like this," McKinney said. "I really think we are breaking ground here. It is a massive undertaking. It will be hard work, but I also think it will be enjoyable and pay dividends for those participating. I hope we can continue to do something like this every semester," McKinney said.

The footage of the Derby Rose Gala will air at 6 p.m. Tuesday, April 24 on channel 10 WLCU-TV. The documentary will air at 6 p.m. May 1.

Campbellsville University is a widely acclaimed Kentucky-based Christian university with more than 3,500 students offering 63 undergraduate options, 17 master's degrees, five postgraduate areas and eight pre-professional programs. The website for complete information is campbellsville.edu.