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Communications

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With Support of Christian Community, Ruthie Lievsay ('17) Takes on New Challenges

The first time Ruthie Lievsay ('17) of Mount Airy, N.C., heard about Gardner-Webb was from a friend who decided to attend the University. Lievsay had a year left in high school, so at the time she didn't give the news much thought.

Then, her senior year, Lievsay received a GWU application and information about scholarships and decided to apply. She was accepted and came for a visit. "All I know is something came over me as soon as we turned left at the stoplight. Tears came to my eyes before I even got a good look at the campus from the car," she recalled. "I knew absolutely that, even if most of the scholarships fell through, this was exactly where the Lord was leading me, and he sure did make that known. As soon as I started meeting people, I knew this place was something special."

By participating in student ministries, she gained friends and took on the challenge of serving as a leader of Wyldlife, which is part of Young Life, a non-denominational Christian ministry that reaches out to adolescents. "I have changed and grown so much more spiritually than I ever thought was possible," she offered. "The Christian community at Gardner-Webb has been immensely influential, and is without a doubt one of my favorite things about this school. Through prayer and encouragement, I gained the courage to volunteer pretty much all of my free time as a Wyldlife leader to hang out with middle school students and tell them who Jesus is. That is absolutely something that high-school Ruthie never would have seen coming. Through the relationships I've made at Gardner-Webb, I'm able to keep going even though I should be completely exhausted. My friends pour into me and push me in the right direction."

Ruthie Lievsay, second from right, participates in ice cream olympics with members of Wyldlife, a Christian ministry to middle-schoolers.

She came to Gardner-Webb with clear goals in mind to study psychology and visual art. "I chose my field of study after meeting a small group of learning-disabled adults when I was in high school," she related. "My mom was one of their teachers, and during a free period in school, I went over to hang out with mom and her class to pass the time. They captured

my heart almost immediately. A two-year internship followed and not long into that internship I was certain that I would be working with special needs for the rest of my life.”

She discovered her artistic talents when she was in middle school and continued to pursue art in high school, where she was supported by her teacher. “With her encouragement, I developed a deep interest in creating art and learning about art,” Lievsay reflected. “Combining my passion for special needs and art sparked my desire to become an art therapist. In researching the field, I found that a combination of art and psychology would set me up for an art therapy master’s program.”

Her favorite medium is watercolor, but through her classes at Gardner-Webb she has learned to use pastels and acrylic and oil paints. She has also developed her drawing skills. “My favorite thing to create is flowers,” she asserted. “They are so delicate, beautiful and unique. I could never do them justice in my paintings, but I love studying them and giving life to them two-dimensionally.”

Although she had chosen to major in psychology, she didn’t know much about the field. Professor of Psychology Dr. James Morgan taught the General Psychology class and inspired her through his teaching. “Dr. Morgan sold me that first semester, getting to know me personally and making me feel valued as a student and just as a person,” Lievsay disclosed. “He has been so influential in my studies and in my life in general.”

Another professor she had that first semester was Professor of Art, Susan Bell. “Her quirky but lovable personality made an impact,” Lievsay explained. “She has taught almost every art course I’ve taken, and I am a better person because of it.”

Her studies have confirmed that she made the right choice. “Art can be a gateway into the psychological realm of humanity,” she observed. “People can calmly and freely express themselves without having to use words, and this gives way to huge insights into their thoughts and their life. Psychology is understanding human nature and why we are the way we are. Art is another form of communication into our innermost psychology.”