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Camp Experience Offers Additional Education for Gardner-Webb University Psychology Alumna

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In First Summer on Campus, CentriKid Helps Samantha Allen ('15) Apply Degree

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—When Samantha Allen first visited Gardner-Webb, she already knew she wanted to pursue a career in which she would work with children. At the time, she expected to become a teacher. But the University helped her discover additional avenues for impacting kids' lives, while also providing opportunities for real-world experiences with children.

After coming to Gardner-Webb from her hometown of Fountain Inn, S.C., Allen met Dr. David Carscaddon, dean and professor in the School of Psychology and Counseling. "I changed my plans after talking with him," Allen shared. "I liked my psychology class in high school, but it wasn't until I came here and saw what the psychology department had to offer that I decided to major in it myself."

During her freshman year at GWU, Allen also connected with LifeWay Kids (Nashville, Tenn.) to work at the organization's CentriKid camps, which offer Bible studies, worship and recreation activities to children in grades three through six. For the past four summers, CentriKid helped Allen apply her Gardner-Webb psychology education to reality-based situations at the kids camps.

"I have been able to develop my skills in compassion and understanding that go a long way when interacting with kids," she explained. "Each summer, there has always been at least one kid who needed their story to be heard, and I was able to lend a listening ear."

After spending the previous three summers on teams that took the camp experience to children in various states like Tennessee, Florida and Missouri, this summer she helped lead CentriKid's first camp series on Gardner-Webb's campus, just weeks after earning her Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University. She believes GWU and CentriKid make great partners because their missions are the same.

“Gardner-Webb wants to proclaim the gospel, and that’s the same goal for

CentriKid. Ultimately, we have the same purpose,” Allen related. “The people on campus and in the community were really welcoming to CentriKid. A couple of churches close to campus that participated in the camp invited our staff to attend their services, which illustrates how supportive and welcoming the people are at Gardner-Webb.”

Allen now hopes to build on her experiences in psychology and her work with children. She and her fiancé, whom she met working with CentriKid, plan to move to New Orleans after getting married. He will attend seminary and she hopes to enter graduate school to study occupational therapy. She said her time at Gardner-Webb, both as a student and a camp staff member, provided her with lessons for her next steps in life.

“The Lord can use you in a lot of different, and sometimes unexpected, ways,” Allen reflected. “In camp, some of the kids get things the first time and others take more time. Even when you don’t see it right away, there’s an impact in their lives. One of the things I take with me is to remember that even when you may not see the fruits of your labor, you can know that you’re planting seeds.”

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University’s purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).