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### **GWU Communication Studies Students Provide Community Service with a Camera**

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# GWU Communication Studies Students Provide Community Service with a Camera

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Office of University Communications

December 13, 2012

## *Student-Led Initiative Offers Free Portraits for Worldwide Day of Giving*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Thanks to the determination of some Gardner-Webb University Communication Studies students, children at the Cleveland County Boys & Girls Club, and their families, were provided the opportunity to participate in a free photography session called Help-Portrait.

Founded by celebrity photographer Jeremy Cowart, Help-Portrait (based in Nashville, Tenn.) is a community of photographers coming together across the world to use their photography skills to give back to their local community. The group's mission is to equip and mobilize individuals and photographers, who will go out and find someone in need, or less fortunate, and take their portrait.

The idea for GWU to get involved emerged from the Southern Baptist Convention when another student mentioned the idea to Gardner-Webb students. Dr. Bob Carey, chair of the Dept. of Communication Studies, was familiar with the program because Cowart is a personal friend and he knew about Help-Portrait and its vision.

“It was (students) Rebekah Rausch, Amanda Smith, and Brigette Allen that approached me about doing a Help-Portrait session in Shelby. They told me they wanted to do it themselves and wanted to receive no pre-event attention or possible sponsorship. I wanted this to be their own heartfelt thing and it was,” said Carey.

Rausch, Smith, and Allen put together a group of about 12 students to help plan the event that was held in conjunction with Help-Portraits worldwide event day for taking portraits on Dec. 8. GWU's participation in the event was held at the Boys and Girls Club in Shelby, N.C. The group even put together clothing and makeup for the photo shoot, where memories were made for both the participants and providers.

“I love people's stories, which is the reason I enjoy photography,” said Smith. The Marietta, Ga., native, currently in her junior year as a communications and photojournalism major with a minor in film, was touched by what transpired that day. “One woman had not seen a picture of herself in 11 years. There was a girl recovering from cancer, who took a portrait with her mother, as well as a family that had never taken a portrait together before. We saw people leaving with smiles and happy feelings. For us it was about doing something selfless.”

Cowart is one of the top music industry photographers in the world and has conducted photo shoots for some of the biggest names in both rock/pop and country music. So far this year, thanks to the efforts of Cowart and volunteers around the world, Help-Portrait has given away over 62,000 portraits in some 35 countries.

“Jeremy is a strong Christian who is all about reaching out and giving to others. For instance, one of the things he does each year is to go to Haiti to help those in need there,” added Carey.

*Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University blends a liberal arts core curriculum with more than 55 major and minor programs of specialized study, a comprehensive academic experience that flows from our Christian commitment to intellectual freedom, service and leadership.*