

CHS Alumni Offer Insights for New Students



HIGHER EDUCATION NETWORK

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This column appears in the February issue of *Lutheran LIFE*, but I am writing it in the last days of 2006. I am thinking about the students who are taking classes now throughout Florida and Georgia, and those who will enter CHS as new students. I am also reflecting on the many past students and the growth they experienced.

Are there lessons to be learned from past students for those considering CHS in the future? I reviewed some columns originally written in 2004 to see what former students might have to say to future students.

Jessica (Jaranowski) Thompson was a student in the first CHS class. She now serves as a fourth-grade teacher at St. Luke's Lutheran-Oviedo. She and her husband, Lawton, are the parents of Noah.

Megan (Armstrong) Miessler was also a student in the first CHS class. She is scheduled to complete her MSW from the University of Central Florida in the Spring. She is serving part-time as the Director of Family and Children's Ministry at Ascension Lutheran-Casselberry. She and her husband, Matt, are expecting their first child in the Spring.

Debbie Cecchetti was another student in that first class. She was — and is — employed as a legal secretary and paralegal at a large Orlando law firm. Debbie has been involved in youth ministry and music ministry both at Hope-Orlando and at

St. Luke's. She is married to Steve, and is the mother of two adult children.

Eric Estes is a second-career seminarian. He completed a portion of his pre-seminary classes with CHS before enrolling at Concordia

called to work in education for the LCMS. I've had a strong desire to do this for years and was also prodded by several influential people in my life during high school."

Megan stated that she had many opportunities to serve

use the knowledge I've gained from attending these classes. It has helped me with every side of my life — as a wife, mother, legal assistant, youth director, worship leader and friend."

Jessica said, "My advice to others would be to explore your faith as much as possible during your college years and learn as much as you can. This is a time in your life when you are assaulted by hundreds of different beliefs and it is important to be grounded in the Truth so that you are not easily swayed. Also, knowledge of your faith is important because there will never be a time when you have more of an opportunity to witness to others."

Eric reflected that, "I have found that there are many responsibilities and worries that can come between me and my desire to serve God. Keep faith that the Lord will guide you and take care of those worries by His means. We may be making plans for the future, but it is the Lord who chooses our steps along the way. CHS is the perfect opportunity for those people who may still have questions about whether or not they have been called to service in the church. It is an opportunity to meet with students with diverse backgrounds and many different intentions in attending the classes offered. The encouraging relationships that form there can open up many different paths for service. The pastors/teachers are always available to listen, give advice and help in any way they can. If I were to give any advice to a person who was considering full-time church work, but was not sure of what direction to go, it would be to go to CHS."

"If I were to give any advice to a person who was considering full-time church work, but was not sure of what direction to go, it would be to go to CHS." -Eric Estes, former CHS student

Seminary-St. Louis. Currently he is serving his vicarage year in Palm Coast where he lives with his wife, Jennifer, and their son Benjamin.

in pre-school and after-school programs, and through those "experiences I really feel God's calling to serve children, not in teaching, but rather through counseling and social work. When I moved to Orlando, specifically to attend the House of Studies, I really had no clue what God had in mind for me. I really feel God calling me to serve in so many areas here in Orlando, but especially with children."

Eric had a different experience. "My decision to pursue the Masters of Divinity has come mostly from an internal calling. I was 14 years old the first time the thought of entering the pastoral ministry came up, and this most often when I was attending youth group events. While I was in high school I had a few pastors ask me if I had ever considered it, so it always stayed on my mind. During college I chose to pursue other interests, but even then the thought of the ministry would come up. Once I began my career I knew that I wanted to devote my time and gifts to Christ's church."

Finally, Debbie Cecchetti had yet another reason. "I have always been a very good 'Martha.' Give me a task and I can administer it and take care of all the details. I love serving others and making them feel welcome. My 'Mary' was not such a natural thing, yet I truly wanted to strengthen that side of my Christian life. This especially came home for me when my best friend at work began experiencing a real thirst to know more about God and what it meant to live your life for Him. I wanted to be able to give her the answers she was searching for and asking me. This circumstance led me to look into what the House of Studies was offering."

Our culture encourages us to think of January as a time for a new beginning. After all, the New Year is pictured as a newborn baby ready to come into the world to symbolize that we can make a fresh start. The thoughts and reflections quoted above come from the mouths of men and women who have enrolled in the Concordia House of Studies so that they might be equipped in new and different ways to serve Him. Some are serving in full-time capacity now, some in part-time and some are still in training. But their words are a powerful witness to what God can do in your life.

If you feel the Lord may be calling you into full-time service in the church, or if you would like additional information about how the Concordia House of Studies may be helpful to you, please contact Dr. Wilke. You can call him in Orlando locally at 407-857-5556, ext. 5, toll free at 877-457-5556, ext. 5, or via e-mail at wwilke@flga-lcms.org. □

One question I asked these students was: "What led you to make the decision to enter church work? What led you to believe that the Lord is calling you into full-time service in the church?"

Jessica replied: "I've known since my early teens that I was



Debbie Cecchetti



Eric and Jen Estes



Jessica and Megan

Women In Mission Gear up for Busy Year



LWML NEWS

Patricia Kubicek
VP Leadership Development

As you are sitting back and reading this article you are probably contemplating what will be happening in your life during 2007. I know that is what I am currently doing as I enjoy a hot cup of tea.

2007 will find the Florida-Georgia District LWML busy beginning with an Executive Committee meeting and

workshop on February 16 and Board of Directors meeting on February 17.

Our Goal Will Be ...

to encourage and develop our new zone leaders within the Florida-Georgia District, making sure that they understand their unique and special job both in the district and in their zone.*

Our Objective Will Be ...

to enthusiastically celebrate God's unique gifts to each individual, respond to God's call to share His grace with all people, learn the knowledge and skills needed to encourage new membership, learn to use resources provided by LWML and the Florida-Georgia District to plan and carry out zone events and to encourage leaders to zealously use her leadership skill to assist and develop new leaders.*

Our Tasks Will Be ...

- Finalizing Plans for Real Joy Celebration – Sept. 28-30, 2007 in Orlando.
- Begin to formulate theme, Bible verse and logo for District Convention 2008.

- Finalizing attendance of delegates and Young Woman's Representatives to the LWML Convention, Sioux Falls, June 21 -24. Theme: "ROCK, Rest on Christ the King"

So as you can see your Florida-Georgia District LWML will begin the year developing leadership and planning opportunities for every woman to become involved in Lutheran Woman's Missionary League.

May God continue to bless each of you during this New Year with His peace and joy.

*excerpt taken from FL-GA LWML President, Lois Ford. □



Looking back on these interviews from three years ago, I find that the former CHS students have good advice for those considering whether God may have a plan for them that involves full-time service in the Kingdom.

Debbie stated that, "I would strongly recommend CHS courses for students in all stages of life. I don't know if I will ever use this Lutheran Teaching Certification in a classroom setting, but I daily