



High-energy teacher keeps up with her young charges

They may have just finished a full day of second grade, but these kids

seem anything but tired. They chatter with teacher Monika Gangwer as they trickle out the door at Seven Oaks Elementary in Eagle. One boy lingers to ask to about a library book, two girls demonstrate their latest gymnastic tricks, others finish up the birthday cards they've made for a classroom volunteer.

When the room finally empties, Gangwer (BA, elementary education, '94) settles into a pint-sized chair. She doesn't look a bit tired either. Even though she's been up since 4:40 a.m. Even though she's been interacting with students nonstop since 9. Even though she'll soon head home to two very busy kids of her own, supper, chores and teacher prep work before hitting the sack and getting up to do it all over again.

"I've got a lot of energy. I'm kind of a whirlwind," says Gangwer. "I was a cheerleader at Boise State, and I cheerlead here about half the day."

Gangwer is one of 534 Boise State graduates who are teachers or administrators in the Meridian School District. About 36 percent of the district's teachers are Boise State alumni, by far the biggest pool from any single university. In nearby Boise School District, the numbers are even higher, with 43 percent, or 723 Boise State alumni, working as teachers or administrators.

Gangwer strives to make her classroom a place where learning is exciting. "We're very

curriculum driven. There is such a high level of teaching at this school. It just makes you want to do better," she says.

Mornings are spent on reading and language arts. Gangwer devotes several lunch hours each week to students who need extra help with reading. Afternoons include science, math and social studies. Hands-on work, integrated lesson plans and a variety of approaches ensure that students with diverse learning styles are reached.

She makes it a point to personally interact with each of her students during the day. "I try to provide the framework. I tell them, I'm one and you are 23, I can't divide myself 23 ways," she says. "They sometimes have to wait to tell me something, but then they get my undivided attention."

Eight years after graduating from Boise State, Gangwer's ties to the university remain strong. She's mentored a number of Boise State student teachers, including several who later landed jobs at her school. During the past year, she's taken classes at Boise State as part of a rigorous program for certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Gangwer is still waiting to find out if she qualified for NBPTS certification. Regardless of the outcome, she's found the process invaluable. "This is the best year I've ever taught. I'm forever changed for going through this," she says.

Gangwer has adopted specific techniques used by her Boise State professors in her classroom; for example, she makes it a point to have students turn in work when they feel it's finished, a tactic that encourages them to focus on effort and attitude.

"I wasn't one of those people who always thought they'd be a teacher," Gangwer says. "It hit me later on. But I've loved doing it, from Day One."

—Janelle Brown

"I wasn't one of those people who always thought they'd be a teacher ... but I've loved doing it."

—Monika Gangwer

Restaurant exec cooks up recipe for growth

It's the wee hours of the night and Dan

Todd is still awake... as usual. He scrutinizes financial data on successful companies, sketches ideas for new menu designs or studies reports in restaurant trade journals.

As president and chief executive officer of his family's business, Smoky Mountain Pizza and Pasta, Todd (BBA, human resource management, '95) has helped the company grow from his brother David's original restaurant in Ketchum into an eight-restaurant operation with sales last year of \$8 million and more than 350 employees.

"I spend a lot of time thinking forward about our company and where we're going and how we're going to get there," says Todd.

When morning comes Todd is at the office by 8 a.m., clad as he often is in dress pants and a crisply pressed, light-blue Smoky Mountain shirt, accentuating his commitment to Smoky Mountain's teamwork philosophy.

He and his father, Jerry Todd, look over architectural drawings for a future restaurant. Then he brainstorms logos and designs reflecting the restaurant's ski-town origin with local designer Ward Hooper (BFA, advertising design, '86).

The rest of his day includes lunching with a computer consultant to discuss upgrading the restaurants' software, discussing accounting system changes, meeting with an associate about future business opportunities, reviewing daily sales figures and working with his colleagues on numerous other projects and issues.

"There is not an average day," Todd says. "So much of it is discovery on a daily basis with a small business."

Some days might find him tasting ingredients for new menu items, or connecting with one of the many community organizations Smoky Mountain sponsors, such as the Firebird Raceway high school drag racing association, or even getting dirty and wet as he did when a water pipe broke at a restaurant on a Sunday.

Small businesses like the Todd family's account for about half of Idaho's economy. And Boise State grads are at the head of many thriving Treasure Valley business, including graphic designers, attorneys, investment advisers, building contractors and many restaurateurs.

"Any kind of small business there is, we've probably got [Boise State grads] involved," says Dick Rapp, Boise State Career Center director.

Some small business have faltered during the economic turbulence of the last two years. Smoky Mountain, however, has seen its sales increase.

"I think that our position as a moderately priced family restaurant ... has helped us be a little insulated from some of the higher-end [economic effects]," he says.

"We pride ourselves on a well-trained staff, attention to service and quality of food."

Todd's business school education has helped him contribute to Smoky Mountain's success.

"I think that more than anything the exposure [at Boise State] through case studies, human resource law, some of the strategy courses ... really broadened my horizons of what I felt we could do as a business," he says.

To prime the company for growth Todd has streamlined the company's financial reporting and banking systems, initiated market research and worked with the staff on health insurance changes and compliance with new human resource laws.

All the while Todd has remained connected to Boise State. Smoky Mountain has sponsored two student interns, the business has been a case study in a management class, and Todd has utilized the services of the Idaho Small Business Development Center for research information.

The diverse challenges and long hours of a small business suit Todd's entrepreneurial spirit.

"I consider it work, but I consider it a passion as well — to develop the concept of a strong company," he says. "It's more than punching a clock."

—Pat Pyke

"I spend a lot of time thinking ... about our company and where we're going and how we're going to get there."

—Dan Todd





Police officer uses skills to protect and serve

Boise police officer Chris Davis (BS, social science, '99) sits in a

briefing room at 3:30 p.m. Friday, ready to start his four-day work-week. He glances at a large computer screen listing recent criminal activity and scribbles notes as bulletins from neighboring states warn of bank robbers or other lawbreakers possibly heading toward the Treasure Valley.

Davis, who majored in criminal justice and history, then heads to his Crown Victoria patrol car and spends the next few hours checking out general reports — items stolen from a car, people returning from vacation to find someone has broken into their home, stolen checks. For the most part, things are quiet until nightfall.

“Once the sun goes down, there’s more active crime,” he says, including bar fights, car burglaries and incidents involving weapons. His background in sociology helps when responding to the occasional family dispute.

“Those classes taught me how to deal with people and understand why people do what they do,” he says. “For instance, when dealing with a Hispanic family, I need to understand that the

male is the head of that family and I need to treat him with respect ... It helps to relate to their culture.”

Despite the inherent danger he faces each day, Davis says, “It’s still my dream job. I like it because I feel like I can make a difference. A lot of my friends sit at home and complain about

things that happen. I feel with my job I can actually do something about that and protect some of the innocent people from some of the ‘bads’ in the world.”

Davis didn’t always plan to be a cop. As a recruit to Boise State on a football scholarship he had plans to be a physical therapist. But his tight practice and game schedule didn’t allow for the time he was supposed to work in the training room, so he decided to make a change.

“I took a couple of criminal justice classes and really liked it,” he recalls. “Then I did a ride-along for a night and fell in love with [police work].”

After graduation, he was hired by the Boise Police Department and entered the Idaho State Police academy in Meridian for three months. He then trained for three more months at the Boise Police Department academy. His university background, he says, was invaluable in both instances.

“It makes a difference to have a degree,” he says. “You have a wider base of knowledge on different situations that might come up. Every day is different than the day before — you have to have a little bit of knowledge on everything.”

Davis encourages current students to focus on getting a degree before worrying about getting a job. “They need to take classes that will really interest them and get them excited about what they’re going to do,” he says — advice he’s taken to heart.

Married with an infant son, he’s already looking to his future. He’d like to retire with the Boise Police Department one day, following a few administrative promotions.

“I’ll probably eventually want to move up into a supervisor’s role,” he says, “but I really like being out on the streets. You can’t beat being the guy on the street.”

—Kathleen Craven

“I feel with my job that I can actually ... protect some of the innocent people from some of the ‘bads’ in the world.

—Chris Davis

Albertson's counts on Van Wagner's attention to detail

t's 8 a.m. and

Tammie

Van Wagner (BBA, accountancy, '99) is already hard at work at her desk at Albertson's corporate offices. Launching Microsoft Outlook, she checks her schedule and begins analyzing figures, tracking sales data and lease contracts from 15 different Albertson's stores.

By day's end, she'll have also juggled employee benefit expenses and stock option exercises, in between work on the company's annual report and the occasional committee meeting. As a corporate accounting analyst Van Wagner, one of several Boise State grads working at the grocery company's corporate offices, is responsible for helping track the Fortune 500 company's 2,300 stores and 220,000 employees.

"This is a large industry with a small profit margin. We need to constantly monitor it," she says, thumbing through quarterly and annual reports filled with numbers, ranks and stock values. "It takes a lot of bean counters to track these numbers and stay on top of what the market is doing."

But Van Wagner hasn't always been skilled in the number crunching game. She started working at Albertson's in 1990 in a data-entry position. In 1994, she went back to school part time, working in sales and auditing while transitioning to a full-time student. For several years she juggled her class work with her job, family responsibilities and civic involvement, eventually graduating with a bachelor's degree in accounting in 1999.

Boise State graduates approximately 80 accountancy students a year, and about 70 percent of those stay in the Treasure Valley, says business dean Bill Lathen. "They leave the university with an in-depth knowledge of accounting and a quality foundation in business practice. They are experts in their field."

As a nontraditional student, Van Wagner says she appreciated Boise State's unique approach to education. "I liked that the students were young and old, and all had different life experiences. I felt an instant camaraderie," she says. "And the professors understood the issues I was dealing with — my job and my kids. There was also greater flexibility with night classes, Saturday classes, seminars and so on. The whole purpose of the journey through life is to satisfy your goals and aspirations, and Boise State facilitated that."

Now that she's out of school, she likes the fact that Boise State is right in her back yard. Not only does she work with several former classmates, she also has former professors she can use for a resource when questions arise. And as incoming president of the Boise chapter of the Institute of Management Accountants, she gives back by working with students involved with Beta Alpha Psi, the student accounting club.

Van Wagner chose to study accounting because it offered a broad perspective of the business world. "I wanted to come out with something that didn't limit me to one occupation," she says. "With accounting, I can go into my career with a good understanding of business in general."

Classes in computers, communication and dispute resolution rounded out her education. "Learning communications skills — mediation and how to get to the heart of the matter — helped me more than I can tell," she says.

While she chose accounting to help her get a leg up in business, she chose Albertson's for more personal reasons: "I wanted to work for a company that was helping the world," she says. "Albertson's supports the customers [and community] who support us."

—Kathleen Craven

"It takes a lot of bean counters to track these numbers and stay on top of what the market is doing."

—Tammie Van Wagner





Electrical engineer studies her way to Micron promotion

You wouldn't immediately peg Jennifer Cheffings as an electrical engineer. She doesn't wear a

white coat or clean room attire and most of her work is done at a desk or in meetings.

But as a quality assurance engineer, it's her responsibility to measure the reliability of new processes for fabrication or assembly before they're approved for use in production. Chips are submitted to her department, where she supervises three technicians who conduct stress tests to determine failure rates and expected lifetimes.

No one is more taken with her day-to-day responsibilities than Cheffings. "Some days I still can't believe I made it, that I'm an electrical engineer," she says.

Cheffings (BS, electrical engineering, '01) began climbing the Micron ladder in October 1990 when she was hired as a production operator. She

applied at Micron because she heard the company would pay for her education.

"Growing up, my family didn't have a lot of money and not a lot of people in my family had gone to school," she says. "I was changing sheets in a motel after I got out of high school, and I knew education was the way for me to make my life better."

She enrolled in general classes at Boise State for the first 18 months before deciding to pursue engineering, the most appealing of the Micron-related fields of study. She tackled classes two at a time, and one each summer.

"Some days I still can't believe I made it, that I'm an electrical engineer."

—Jennifer Cheffings

"It was really tough," she says. "So many people said things to me like, 'You're still in school?' or 'Why are you doing this to yourself?'" But Cheffings says as her credits began to add up, she saw corresponding promotions at work and was determined to finish.

She also enjoyed a deepening understanding of her job, grasping the finer details of chip production that were at first over her head.

She was promoted to junior engineer, then engineer in the spring of 1999. When she obtained her electrical engineering degree, she joined more than 100 other Micron engineers who have earned their degrees from Boise State. Nearly 200 more Micron employees are currently enrolled in engineering-related classes at Boise State.

Alex Gutierrez, education coordinator for Micron, says the company takes pride in employees like Cheffings who have worked their way through the ranks.

To further facilitate learning, Micron offers on-site, shift-friendly courses through Boise State, picking up the bulk of the cost of employees' education in approved fields.

"Being able to grow a talented work force from within and partnering with Boise State is definitely a plus for Micron," Gutierrez says. "The proximity has been very beneficial for both parties."

Cheffings doesn't see herself heading back to school anytime soon, instead taking some time to enjoy her accomplishments. But with the Boise State master's program now available just down the road, she doesn't discount an eventual return to the classroom.

"I could have never made it and kept my job, which was everything to me, if I would have had to leave Boise to finish my degree," she says. "It has meant a lot to me to make it."

—Sherry Squires

Nurse fulfills her lifelong dream to help others

Like most nurses, Betzi Quiroz (BS, nursing,

'01) has a job that often demands long, intense hours. But for Quiroz, hard work and dedication come naturally. In addition to her full-time job at St. Luke's Regional Medical Center, she works part time at Central District Health as a child safety passenger technician.

On a typical day at St. Luke's, Quiroz is responsible for five to six patients on the medical-surgical floor. She is required to perform multiple duties — administering medications, comforting patients before and after surgery, assisting physicians. By the end of her shift, Quiroz's feet ache from standing so long.

At times, Quiroz says it can be difficult because nurses have to spread themselves so thin.

But the difficulties are offset by the rewards — especially when a patient is able to return home. "I love seeing them healthy ... seeing my patients smile," she says.

Quiroz is one of hundreds of Boise State nursing graduates who staff area hospitals, health-care agencies, long-term facilities and medical offices. Each year, the nursing department typically graduates 120 students with associate and baccalaureate degrees and sends them into the Treasure Valley work force.

Despite the challenges, Quiroz loves being a nurse. It has been her dream since she was 8 years old, and she credits Boise State with helping her fulfill that dream. "Not only did Boise State help me gain my skills," she says, "but the university provided me with the financial assistance to reach my goals. I became a nurse at Boise State."

The skills she developed at the university come in handy after her 12-hour shifts have ended. Passionate about teaching, Quiroz volunteers her time at several ranches in Idaho — educating shepherders, most of whom are Peruvian, about common health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure and the eye diseases pterygium and pingueculum.

Quiroz, the former Betzi Baldeon, has a special kinship with the Peruvians. She was born into a family of shepherders in the Andes.

As a young girl, Quiroz wasn't thinking about going to college. Higher education wasn't something that was valued in her family. But spending three months in a hospital as a child changed her life.

It was then that Quiroz realized the pivotal role that nurses play in patient care. "They [nurses] were always so compassionate. They made time to sit and talk with me. I knew that's what I wanted to do with my life," she recalls.

And nothing was going to stand in her way. Quiroz was already a certified nursing assistant when she graduated from Capital High School in 1997.

During her freshman and sophomore years at Boise State, she put her certificate to use working at several community nursing homes. By her junior year, she was a nurse apprentice at St. Luke's.

The teachers at Boise State, Quiroz says, were instrumental in her success. "They were always willing to lend me a hand. Thanks to them, I am doing what I like most ... being a nurse."

Next spring Quiroz hopes to begin working toward a master's degree in nursing. And after graduate school? In her typical enthusiastic fashion, she has a quick answer. "I want to get my Ph.D. and teach at Boise State," she says with a laugh, "but my husband tells me one thing at a time."

—Molly Griffin

"I love seeing them healthy ... seeing my patients smile."

—Betzi Quiroz

