

Shanks' voice rings with determination

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Marilyn Bugenhagen, director of Student Involvement, said Adair is "conscientious" and "tenacious" in what she does. "She has been using, learning and growing in her leadership abilities every day," Bugenhagen said. "There is no doubt she is getting the most out of her academic career."

But her education doesn't stop in the classroom.

"I am here to help students get involved," said Shanks, who is also the management team leader for the 21st annual Big 12 Conference on Black Student Government.

The conference is a three-day forum for addressing problems, concerns and ideas of black students attending predominantly white colleges and universities, she said.

Bugenhagen said Shanks was the perfect role model for students who are attending the conference.

Shanks said she does consider herself a leader, "but only because I learned to follow in the footsteps of leaders."

The leaders in Shanks' life are her family members, she said.

In order to lead, "one must learn about the issues and learn how to follow. Then one must know how to use their voice."

You need to speak up

Eleanor Shanks, Adair's mother, said her daughter has had a voice since she was 6 years old.

"By the time she was in kindergarten, Adair knew she had to voice her opinions to get what she wanted," Eleanor said.

She said Adair is vocal in a "very dignified way."

In elementary and high school, Adair Shanks wrote for her school newspaper and was in many organizations and student government.

During her senior year in high school she ran Chicago's mayor's office for a day. Along with other students, Shanks told the city government that its decision to move Soldier Field, the home of the NFL's Chicago Bears, would not be in the best interest of the community. Shanks felt honored to have had the opportunity to "speak out about real issues and deal with real people."

"As a child I was told it was important to get involved," she said. "I was always taught to give back to the community and thank the community for everything it gave me."

Shanks, along with Leslie Bell, a member of Afrikan People's Union, recently wrote letters to Chancellor James Moeser requesting a multicultural interest floor in Abel Residence Hall and renovations for UNL's Culture Center.

"It is important to have support groups for students from all backgrounds from the beginning," Shanks said. "Special interest floors accomplish this."

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ELEANOR SHANKS
Adair Shanks' mother

Because of Shanks' and Bell's efforts, a special interest floor will be implemented next year, and the Culture Center received new computers, Internet access, a fresh coat of paint and updated books, journals and other research materials.

"It makes me feel proud that we, as students, have the power to make change," Shanks said. "You cannot sit back and say nothing."

"If you want to see action, you need to speak up."

Building upon struggles

Speaking up, however, is sometimes easier considered than done, Shanks said.

"I have struggled with many things in my life," Shanks said. "But from every struggle that I had to endure, I have become a better person."

Growing up with three older brothers, Shanks often saw herself struggling to be more like them.

From her brothers, she learned to be an individual. She now looks back at her experiences and says her brothers paved the way for her academic career.

But when she was young, academics didn't come easy for Shanks.

She began attending school when she was 2½ but would not read until fifth grade. Worried that something was wrong, Shanks' mother met with psychologists and was simply told, "When Adair's ready, she will (excel)."

And she eventually did. Friends and family said Shanks really began to "show her stuff" in high school.

Kimberly Shanks, Adair's sister-in-law, said Adair's "stuff" was doing everything possible to become involved in school and the community.

"The girl has a strong heart," Kimberly said. "She always had a positive influence on everything."

But the death of Adair's father, Otis Shanks, during her senior year in high school posed another struggle for her, her sister-in-law said.

Kimberly said she noticed a change in Adair after her father died.

"Her outlook on life changed - she understood that life doesn't last forever and you must get as much out of your life as possible," Kimberly said. "Adair looked at her father's death as a means to keep on growing."

Continuing her education is what her father would have wanted her to do, Adair Shanks said. Her father's death inspired her to attend graduate

school and continue teaching people to voice their opinions.

"My father's death was extremely difficult, and I have changed because of it," Adair said.

Pushing to learn

In addition to her father, Shanks said her mother, aunts and brothers also served as mentors in her life.

"I hold my family very close to my heart," she said. "If it wasn't for all of their support and guidance, I wouldn't be who I am today - an educated and diverse individual."

She said her mother and father taught her three things while growing up: to believe in education, to strive for the best and to get involved.

Adrian Beverly, Shanks' high school principal, said that when Shanks was involved in something, she truly was involved.

"When Adair saw something that wasn't right, she did everything she could to make it right," Beverly said.

Shanks calls Beverly one of her personal motivators.

"He always knew how to push me the extra mile," she said.

Beverly said he didn't do the pushing: "Adair encouraged herself to become who she is today."

Spirituality of success

Growing up in a community where all the families on the block were each other's family, Shanks strongly believes in community faith.

"Spirituality is important to stay balanced," she said. "It is a great feeling to have to know that you can turn to others for help and in a time of need."

Eleanor Shanks said Adair was brought up knowing she should help others as much as she could.

"Adair will leave an impact on society," Eleanor said. "She wants so much for people that she will always be remembered in the hearts of those who she has helped."

Adair Shanks plans to graduate in August with a master's degree in journalism. She said her goal is to have a career in journalism but would be happy anywhere life leads her.

"I can be a follower too," she said. "As long as I am helping others, especially youth, I do not care where life decides to lead me."

Union Board pushes for more hours

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make it possible," he said.

Union Board members also agreed to appeal the general reductions CFA made for the unions.

"CFA did not make it clear to what exactly they were cutting when they reduced the union budget by \$19,960," Swanson said. "I would like to know what they planned on reducing from the Nebraska Union budget."

Swanson said CFA's general reductions prevented the resource center from expanding its services.

Maaske questioned how students are going to use the resource center's services if they are not offered.

"To me and (Student Involvement Director) Marilyn Bugenhagen, it is a shame to think Student Involvement has built a new resource center for the community and will not be able to expand our services to the community," Swanson said.

In addition to Student Involvement funding, Swanson said he will appeal having tobacco sales at Nebraska and East Union information desks.

Union Board members, however, do not support Swanson and the university's efforts to remove tobacco sales.

The Committee for Fees Allocation will meet Thursday at 6 p.m. in the Nebraska Union.

In other Union Board business:

Swanson will be going to the NU Board of Regents meeting Feb. 28 requesting an additional \$800,000 to cover the added cost to renovate the Nebraska Union. Swanson said the petition is requesting the use of funds from a surplus bond that the university holds.

The additional funding request will not increase the additional \$20 student fee already being implemented next fall, he said.

Three restaurants have expressed interest and have bid on the food court space occupied by Burger King in the Nebraska Union: Runza, McDonald's and Burger King. Swanson said other restaurants still have time to make inquiries. The bids will be revealed at the University Service's Purchasing Office, 1700 Y Street, Feb. 27 at 2:30 p.m.

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CLARIFICATION

The position of Nebraskans Against the Death Penalty was incorrectly portrayed in an editorial in Wednesday's newspaper. The organization's testimony was neutral regarding LB1308, a bill that would change the state's method of execution from electrocution to lethal injection.

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