

She's the Boss

Reigning Student of the Year gets vocal

By Chrissie Prichard

Cheerleader, yes. Dumb blonde, no. Packing a 4.0 in civil engineering and bringing Chipola College's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa to national recognition, Chrissie Prichard now reigns as the 2003 Florida College Student of the Year. Here, in her own words, are her thoughts on leadership and how she came to be Florida Leader magazine's top student.

Everyone has heard the term "born leader," but is someone really born a leader, or is becoming a leader something that happens almost by accident? I believe there are people who from birth possess the natural ability to lead others; however, I also believe there are those who become great leaders without any intentions of doing so.

When I entered high school, I joined every club available, not because I knew anything about the organizations or desired to make a difference, but because all my friends were members and it seemed like the right thing to do. One of the clubs I joined was Key Club, which required at least 50 hours of community service to maintain membership. I fulfilled all of the requirements, but I was more concerned with spending time with my friends than I was about serving my community.

It wasn't until my junior year that I began to understand the importance and great rewards offered by community service and leadership. I realized that most of my classmates were much more concerned with weekend plans than they were about important issues such as cancer prevention and poverty. I knew then that I wanted to convince my peers that issues larger than their inner circle of friends affected their lives and that they had the ability to address these issues; however, it wasn't until I entered college that I had the opportunity to do so.

When I enrolled at **Chipola College**, I joined the Student Government Association to become more involved in campus activities, and I served as an SGA senator my sophomore year. I also was chosen as a member of

Chipola's cheerleading squad and was elected co-captain my sophomore year. Although serving in these roles allowed me to develop my leadership ability, it was the Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society that truly gave me the opportunity to impact my campus and community. I was



chosen as one of six members of the PTK chapter's Leadership Team. It was through working with the team that I learned that true leadership is not dictating orders but working with others to accomplish a goal. Together, we developed and coordinated countless projects that benefited our college and community, something that none of us would have accomplished alone.

My sophomore year, I had the responsibility of coordinating our college's Leaders of Promise conference. At first, the responsibility of organizing a leadership conference for 16 high schools seemed overwhelming. Even though I was reluctant to rely on other people to complete tasks that were ultimately my responsibility, I realized I had to ask others to help me organize the conference. I worked with the PTK Leadership Team and other PTK chapter members to set goals for the conference and develop the agenda.

We incorporated my high school goal of motivating students to make a difference on their campus by inviting service organizations from the community to speak about possible service projects. They sought to convince students through activities and discussions that they could integrate these projects on their campuses. Not only did the students leave the conference with the confidence and motivation to lead, but I was able to grow and develop as a leader as well. I learned to surround myself with competent and trustworthy people and to lead by empowering others, guiding others through their responsibilities rather than dictating instructions.


Another important lesson of leadership that I learned at Chipola is time management. Many leaders find it difficult to devote time to the organizations that they're involved in without sacrificing their studies, family, or friends. I have certainly struggled with time management during the past two years. Although I did my best to complete my tasks without delay, there were days when I was certain I wasn't going to be able to accomplish my goals. Between cheerleading practice, PTK projects, and SGA meetings, I often felt completely overwhelmed. However, staying focused on my goals and keeping my priorities in order helped me to endure. At times, I thought that it wasn't worth it, but when we completed a successful PTK project, organized a campus event, or executed a perfect cheerleading routine, I knew that my work was worthwhile.

My leadership experiences at Chipola have taught me that leaders come in all shapes and sizes. Many people assume you must be aggressive and outgoing to be a leader. However, I believe that some of the best leaders are those working quietly behind the scenes. Although at times it's frustrating and tiresome, I would encourage everyone to assume a leadership position. Inspiring and leading others develops maturity, responsibility, and character—qualities that'll be beneficial throughout life. The rewards of leadership greatly outweigh the hardships.

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Surrounded by family and friends, Student of the Year Chrissie Prichard shows off her plaque after the 2003 award ceremony.



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