

# When a student is a parent

TEXT **BONAR TUCKER**

PHOTOS **RICO DIMARZIO**

Although getting a college degree ranges in importance from a "necessity" to "obtaining a feeling of accomplishment", parents who attend University of Nevada, Las Vegas say their every day schedules are "difficult" at best.

With a median age of 26 years, a large percentage of UNLV students are parents as well. Full time parents have a pressing job while being part time students.

Troy Snider is raising his eight year old son, Adam, alone. He had completed three years toward an engineering degree when his now ex-wife became pregnant.

"I did what a lot of others do. I quit school to work full time," he said.

Snider now regrets that decision.

*"I never knew how hard it was on her until I got custody and I went back to school."*

"It was touch and go for years. Adam had a lot of doctor bills at an early age and we just couldn't seem to get ahead. I know my degree won't guarantee a better job for me but it will probably keep me in the running for one," he said. "I mean, at least I'll have a chance."

Snider said he now has more respect toward his ex-wife than he previously had.

"She was in college when Adam was born," he said. "I never knew how hard it was on her until I got custody and I went back to school."

Snider admits to missing classes occasionally because he feels a strong need to be Dad.

"I'll sort of push Adam out of my life during finals or mid-terms but I try to make it up on other days when school isn't so critical. It just isn't as easy as I thought."

Snider said he now has to always be thinking of something.

"In the old days, I'd work and be done when my shift was over. Or I'd go to classes and party after doing well on a test. Now," said Snider, "I've got to wonder if there is any milk left in the fridge or if the sitter will pick up Adam from school on time or make sure we've got clean

clothes for the next day. Sometimes I feel like I'm on a wheel, running fast but not really getting anywhere."

Diana Barnes, a junior at UNLV, said she started working on her degree before her son, Dairus, was born.

"I'm not a single parent and my husband is very supportive of my going to school," Barnes said. "I've had lots of family support with my mother-in-law especially helping. But it still can be difficult."

Barnes, who views getting her degree as a "personal goal", uses UNLV's day care/preschool center to help her deal with the pressures of having a child while having classes.

"The preschool has been so beneficial for all of us. Dairus loves it and we know he's well cared for. That assurance, as a parent, just can't be paid for."

Susan Miller claims graduating from college is the key she requires to give her children a more secure future.

"It's been a long road but now that I'm a senior, I can see the light at the end of the tunnel," Miller said. "I feel it's something all of us have worked for together."

Miller's three children are equally proud of Mom.

"I don't remember when she wasn't in school," said her oldest daughter, Linda, 13 years. "I've had to do a lot of the cooking and we've all had to help clean up but it's o.k. most of the time."

Miller said she'd like to see UNLV become a little more welcoming to parents. Once, when her son broke his arm in a skateboarding accident, Miller missed an important test and was not allowed to make it up.

"I just knew that professor had never had children or he would have understood," she said. "That hurt my grade point average."

Although balancing the job of parenting with the job of school duties (and, in some cases, with outside jobs as well) can be challenging, many said they feel the push of having kids keeps the pressure on to finish.

Miller summarized this feeling by saying, "After all this trouble, after all the 'all-nighters', after taking forever to get back on budget when I've finally gotten tuition paid for yet another semester, I'm definitely not going to stop till that diploma is in my hands!"



**Diana Barnes with her son, Dairus**



**The sandbox is a favorite place to play.**

## UNLV's Preschool nurtures learning experiences

TEXT **TINA CRINITE**

PHOTOS **RICO DIMARZIO**

It's a warm and sunny day as girls and boys from ages two to six with bathing suits and dripping hair come running up to greet us. Licensed caregivers Ellen Berman and Julie Puchalsky explain to the children that we are here to take photographs of them.

Berman suggests, "Why don't we get some shots in the pool?"

Soon practically all the kids are splashing and posing for the camera simultaneously. Others run to perform tricks on the monkey bars and a few come back from the sandbox covered with dirt from head to toe.

These are the kids of UNLV's College of Education Preschool. Unlike a regular daycare center, this one is licensed as a preschool where the children learn, within a healthy and accepting environment, following an innovative, developmental, and educational program.

The daycare was formed in 1971 by Consolidated Students of the University of Nevada (CSUN) who still support it, and was upgraded to a preschool in 1979.

"It's a wonderful place in which I feel secure leaving Cassie while I'm attending classes," mother Candice Bodner said. "They provide a place in which they en-

courage singing, arts and crafts, and concern about today's issues."

During Earth Day festivities, the children drew pictures and helped clean the campus to honor the taking care of their environment.

Berman and Puchalsky both agreed that it was important for the children to learn "self-discipline, self-direction, self-importance and responsibility" during their time spent there.

"We try to promote teamwork and friendship among the children," they said. "There are arguments and dis-



**Preschool children cool off on a hot Las Vegas afternoon.**