

## ADULT STUDENTS ARE MASTER JUGGLERS

By ANGELA SHUFF  
Layout Editor

Traditional students think they have it hard, juggling schoolwork, part-time jobs, and a social life. But, true credit for hard work must go to the adult students who in the middle of their lives are taking on the challenge of finishing their degree.

Because of the convenient location of the campus, Penn State Harrisburg has a large amount of adult students. Residents of Harrisburg, York, Carlisle, and Hershey can earn a Penn State degree in their back yard.

Before the addition of four-year programs welcoming freshmen, the average age of a Penn State Harrisburg student was about 27 years of age, according to Donna Howard, Student Services. Adult students are pursuing a wide range of degrees, but the most popular choices are Business, Information Systems Technology, and Computer Science. Jobs abound in the computer field, and adult students are rerouting their careers to take advantage of this growing industry.

If anyone would ask a 21-year-old student what he is doing, he would probably reply that he is first and foremost a college student. Adult students however, do not see themselves as students first. They are spouses, parents, and employees first and students second. Sticking with the commitment to return to school in mid-life takes a lot of time management and discipline. Besides the pressure of schoolwork, adult students work full time and participate in Parent Teacher Associations, community committees and church organizations.

Cheryl Klipa, English, went to college right out of high school, but she did not take it seriously. This time around it means more to her. "I want to do it for me," she said. Her frustration comes when trying to find time to do work. She has to rely too

much on internet sources because it is hard for her to make time to be in the library. "If my daughter has a soccer game, I am going to go to watch her play, instead of studying at home," said Klipa.

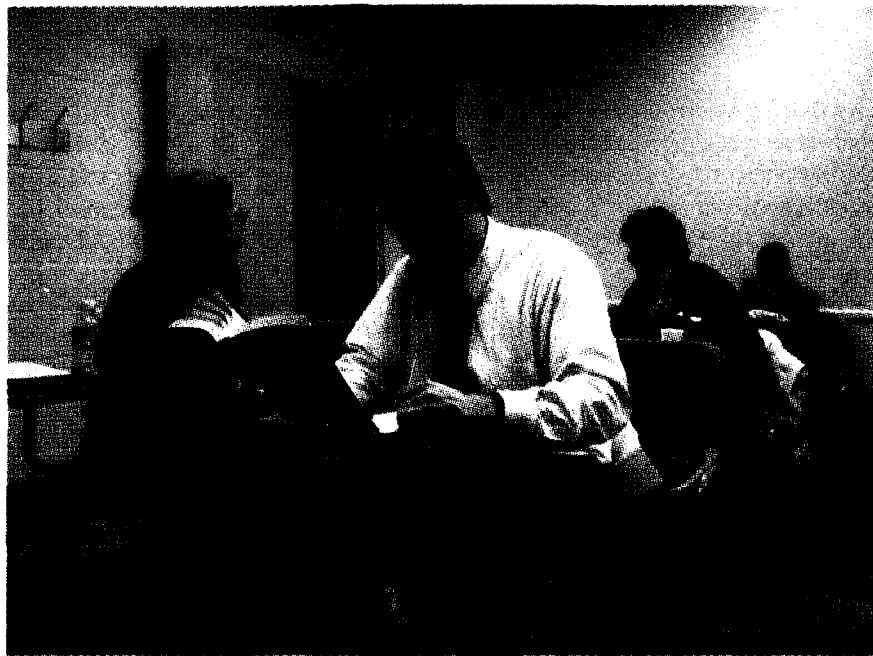
"I just take it all in stride," said Bill Howe, communications. Howe went to Lycoming College after high school, but now he is more focused. He laments that he does not have enough time for his wife and daughter, but he tries to involve them in the college experience by taking them to art exhibits and cultural shows.

Adult students add a lot of insight to the classroom environment. They have real world experience and they share that knowledge with other students.

Donna Howard in the Student Assistance Office, helps adult students orient themselves when they first start the process of returning to school. One of the biggest struggles for students who work full time is that they do not have any time to get dinner before class starts at 6:00 p.m., therefore Student Services provides free grab and go meals before evening classes a few times a year. This lets the evening students know that Student Services is there for them if they ever need help or encouragement.

Because adult students are already slaves to other responsibilities, it is almost impossible for them to get involved on campus. They are always on the run, therefore there are no organizations or clubs exclusively for them, with the exception of Alpha Sigma Lambda, the adult Honor Society. To be an ASL member, students must be an undergraduate student, 24 years of age or older, they must have 30 credits, a 3.7 GPA and they must rank in the top 10% of this group of adult students.

"Being an ASL member is a great honor, which looks wonderful on a resume," said Charlotte Specter, ASL advisor. It also provides a social network of adult students who can form a support group for each other. Every April, the national ASL office awards seven \$1,000 scholarships and one \$1,500 scholarship to qualifying adult students.



photos by Steve Standridge

David Ritter works hard to keep up with many responsibilities, but believes a degree will be worth it in the end.

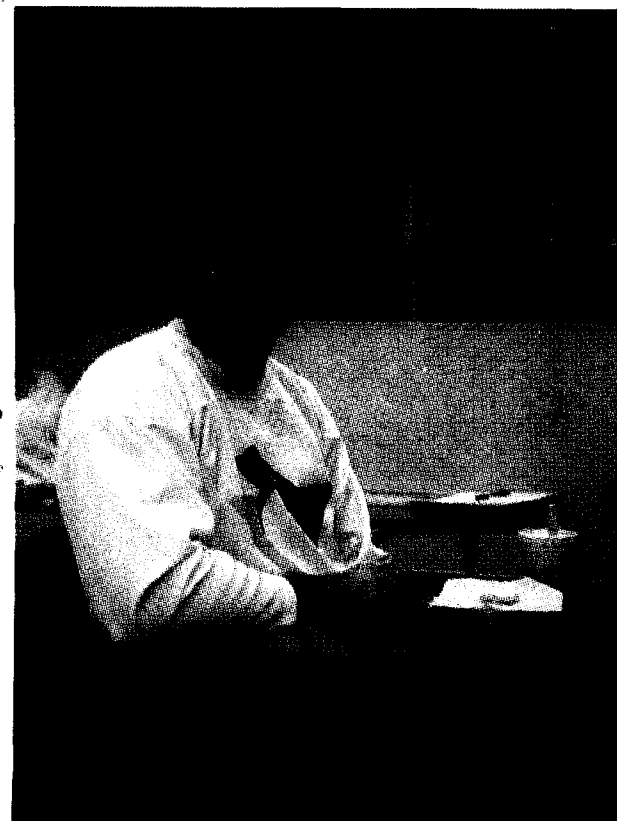
The Harrisburg chapter of ASL just announced that applications for a \$50 book grant are available in the Student Assistance Center. The grants are provided from the funds generated from Fox Market's Save and Share program.

Getting a degree comes from a drive for satisfaction. For David Ritter, interdisciplinary humanities, completing his degree was one thing in his life that always felt unresolved, so now he is doing something about that. "I didn't see the need for a degree when I was younger. I thought I knew everything. But now I'm like a sponge, and I enjoy learning," said Ritter. Adult students need to be recognized for their persistence and dedication. They are taking the initiative to get ahead even though they could easily let many things hold them down.

**"I didn't see the need for a degree when I was younger. I thought I knew everything. Now I'm a sponge, and I enjoy learning!"**



Cheryla Klipa hopes to finish her degree in the next year and a half and then look for a job in which she can use her English degree.



"I just have to take it all in stride," says Bill Howe, who is working toward a career in film production.