

A man with a mission

■ Dr. Madden brings his own blend of knowledge, humor and guidance to Penn State Delco

By MEREDITH BECKER
Staff Writer

"Knowledge is dead,
Learning is living."
— Albert Einstein

With these words written on the board Dr. Michael Madden begins his principles of psychology class. He endeavors to make his class memorable, "a moment in time" that the students will walk away from knowing that they were respected and that, perhaps they even taught the professor a thing or two.

Dr. Madden looks at home in his therapy office — couch and all. When a reporter tells him she wants to do a story on him because she enjoyed his class, he looks pleased.

"I want to be a unique experience [for students] not just another textbook being," he says.

His classes are an eclectic mix of student presentations on information from the book, stories of how the information being taught has entered into or impacted his life, discussions on life and how parts of the presentations have or could impact our lives. And usually, once a week, Madden holds a "guided visualization."

Many do not know what to expect when someone says, "guided visualizations." This is when Dr. Madden takes students through a breathing exercise trying to get them totally relaxed, talks students through a place, a city for example, and tries to get them to really think about "who we are."

This is just one of the few questions he feels are the big questions in life, and he wants to help steer us towards our own answers.

He also assigns the classes a series of abstracts on different articles of his choosing so he can try to get a one-on-one understanding of each student. It's the kind of extra touch other professors don't have the time to do. Some of Delco's professors teach upwards of five different classes a semester. They can't allow themselves the "luxury" of getting to know each of their students.

Dr. Madden is different from all of those people; "the system" he calls it, when students and professors never take the time to connect with one another. He feels that every student has their own story to tell, and that professors really need to take the time that they are given with those students and learn as much about each as possible.

Madden received his doctorate at the age of 35 after teaching high school. If he looks familiar, you may have met him when he was teaching at Strath Haven High School.

Madden is an ordained non-denominational minister he was ordained while working for his doctorate.

Why'd he become a minister?

"I was at a low point in my life and I realized psychology wasn't giving me a whole lot of answers," he said.

He met a Catholic priest at a workshop who told him that psychology literally means the study of the psyche, or soul. Then one of his clients passed away, and their family asked Madden to speak at the funeral, "which just meant so much to me." Soon after he heard about an ordination class and he got ordained.

"Ever since people have been asking me to do their wed-



Photo by Meredith Becker

Dr. Michael Madden offers his thoughts on teaching, the world and his contributions to it.

dings," Madden said. "I've done over 50 by now."

At the end of the semester he asks students to write a field study paper on a topic of interest, whether it's their major or not. Students figure out what type of group they want to interview, then ask them questions to try to uncover a theme among them.

Some people choose to interview doctors; others interview fellow students on various issues like working while attending school or being parents and students at the same time.

Madden uses his life for so many purposes. He leads retreat weekends for fathers and sons (occasionally mothers and daughters or fathers and daughters) where there is no civilization in sight — no phones, no TV, not even a watch. He gets rid of all the "static" as he puts it, in order for the pairs to open up to each other, work together towards a goal like starting a fire in the rain.

We begin talking about cultures starting with the Amazon and different tribal ideologies. Then from there we veer off into uncharted territory: American culture and how we're constantly changing it.

He views America as a culture that is still trying to find its place in society. He shows me a catalog, which he claims to "live off of." In it are descriptions of different types of weekend retreat classes, one topic of these classes seems to keep popping up in the list: Yoga, the latest fad in the U.S.

He comments on how ironic he finds it for people to jam into one weekend, what took hundreds of years to master, and in the end call themselves "masters."

We discuss the problem of young adults using drugs, and how he feels like maybe we as a culture have reached a

point where since we have no "rights of passage" into adulthood that maybe these are becoming those rights. This is a topic that would regularly enter into the classroom discussion; Madden wants to understand what it is that we young adults do and why we do it.

He genuinely worries about our generation, not for his own good but for ours. Everyday he has patients who are dealing with the same problems that we face, only we apparently deal with them better, because we are not sitting in his office talking about them to him. He says he hopes that from his classes that he can achieve a better grasp on what students face day to day, so he can help the ones who come to him for advice.

"9-11 changed a lot of our reality," our final topic of discussion was the events of September 11, Madden taught the first class I had after hearing the news, at that point it was all still fuzzy as to what was happening.

He was visibly shaken by the whole scenario, he asked us to bow our heads and reflect on what this meant in our lives.

He said a few words, he didn't start pounding out verses or anything, he just simply said a prayer for the people suffering to be protected and to keep others safe from danger; nothing controversial, just a moment of peace.

I walked out of that classroom and stood in the entrance to the Classroom building next to Madden and watched in horror as the first tower crumbled on the television in front of me.

Looking back, as a student, that prayer at that point meant everything in the world to me. When I told Madden that he replied:

"I've been in the classroom for 30 years now, and that was the first time I led a public prayer."

Showalter to lead student government in Fall '02



Photo by Anteia Consorto

The new SGA team has lots of plans for next year.

By MEREDITH BECKER
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Come next August there will be some familiar faces in new places in the SGA hierarchy. The Student Government Association of Penn State Delaware County held elections on March 25-27 for the student body to vote for who they want in power for the year.

For the next term the former treasurer Lauren Showalter will be stepping up as president, with Christine Ferroni at her side as vice president. The secretary will be Sandy Sylvestri, co-secretary will be Jamila Bishop who will be taking over the position totally at the end of the fall semester, treasurer will be David Prentice and senate

leader will be Nanaesi Cato.

SGA is a student-run organization, which has helped out with programs like "Toys for Tots" and the Chinese New Year celebration. It deals with some of the financial issues along side the Allocation committee: basically trying to spread enough money around for all the clubs to be able to have a chance for a good year.

Showalter says she has big plans for SGA next year. She wants to make the group more accessible to the students.

"You can talk to the SGA leaders about anything that you may be having a problem with," Showalter said, "from trying to select a major, to raising money towards an event for your club."

Showalter says she under-

stands that, "not a lot of people know who we are." She wants to rectify this problem and rebuild the bridge she feels there should be for the students.

The staff alongside Showalter will be replacing this year's leaders they were: Andrew Lowry, president; Keith Farrell, vice president; Ivena John, secretary; Lauren Showalter, treasurer and Dan Zacher, senate leader.

The SGA is looking forward to hearing from students, after all nothing can be changed if it's not talked about. You can be a part of the SGA at Penn State Delco, if you're interested just log onto the SGA's web site at clubs.psu.edu/delcoSGA and see how you can be a part of the team.