



With a look of exertion, Missouri native Joe Jobe strives to complete one more arm curl in the Academy's weightroom. Photo by Brandon Russell

# Rigorous Program Promises Prosperity

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Academy's  
formula for  
success builds  
students'  
minds, bodies  
by Scott Vater

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On a hill east of Maryville a serene cluster of brick buildings sat overlooking the 102 River. To most, the place was known as the old Mount Alverno Convent, but to the seven students in the Academy University Scholarship Program during the fall semester, it was home.

The convent had been vacant for several years until July 1988 when it was taken over by Pennsylvania native David Hemmerling.

While in Pennsylvania, Hemmerling had launched a project that allowed high school seniors through college juniors to apply for college schooling absolutely free.

After running smoothly for 19 years this program was discontinued due to lack of room for the 30 students and lack of funding to construct a larger facility. Hemmerling then began searching for a different building in order to continue providing educational opportunities for young people.

His search brought him to "the Mount." The structure appealed to him because of its proximity to the University and the perfect living conditions it provided.

The program provided everything from tuition to toothpaste, along with some extras like popcorn and movie passes. The only things students provided for themselves were clothing, spending money and transportation to and from Maryville.

Some might have said such a program was an "easy education" with no cost to the student — a statement that couldn't have been further from the truth. According to Hemmerling, students were required to be "colossally hard workers."

One look at the schedules of the Academy stu-

dents was a definite indication of their will to work. Students at the Academy put in 17-and-a-half hour days, with a minimum of five hours study time outside the classroom per day. They rose at 6 a.m., dressed, showered and prepared breakfast by 6:45 and left for the University at 7:30. On weekends, six hours of study were required during the two-day period.

Besides school, each student participated in a rigorous physical fitness program and had the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. All members also held jobs at the Academy, and in their spare time were encouraged to perform eight hours of community service per week.

"It was only as demanding as you made it, but if you used the Academy's recipe, success would be inevitable," Travis Collins said.

The overall goal of the Academy was to strive for physical fitness and academic excellence. In the past, 90 percent of Hemmerling's Academy students had graduated with high honors and 98 percent were on the Dean's list.

"We were trying to cause our students to create noticeable resumes," Hemmerling said.

Although the Academy began with only a few students, the halls of the old convent were full of sound again. With hopes for 160 students by 1993, the once idle structure was to be busier than it had ever been.

When the Academy University Scholarship Program moved to Missouri it filled the brick buildings with the hopes and dreams of youth, and thanks to David Hemmerling, those dreams were possible.





Academy members Mark Schwartz, Travis Collins, Stan Chorzepa and Debbie Wheatley await their ride to the University. Their tuition was paid under David Hemmerling's program. *Photo by Don Carrick*

Originally built as a convent and Catholic school for the sisters of St. Francis, Mount Alverno now houses students of the Academy University Scholarship program. *Photo by Don Carrick*

