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## Starkville chiropractor goes back to school, earns master's degree from MUW Friday

By Kristin Mamrack

[kmamrack@cdispatch.com](mailto:kmamrack@cdispatch.com)

Monday, December 4, 2006 11:29 AM CST

Dr. Robert Leach of Starkville turned 51 years old Saturday.

On Friday, he walked across the stage at Mississippi University for Women's Rent Auditorium to be recognized during the school's fourth annual December Graduates' Recognition Ceremony.

Leach, a chiropractor who has been in private practice in Starkville since 1979, owns and operates Leach Chiropractic Clinic.

In addition to maintaining a successful practice, he has written four textbooks, including a major chiropractic textbook, *The Chiropractic Theories*, which has been used by more than 20,000 chiropractors around the world.

A licensed chiropractor in Georgia and Mississippi, he began clinical research in 1981.

But he had never had any "formal training in research," he said, until the success of his wife, following her 2004 graduation from the Culinary Arts Institute at MUW, motivated him to pursue his studies as a non-traditional student at the same school.

This month, he is graduating with a master of science degree in health education. He was one of 33 students participating in the December graduation ceremony Friday.

"I've been dabbling in research ever since I graduated from chiropractic school," he explained. "I had a desire to get another degree, but I had never done it.

"When my wife, Vicki, got her culinary degree two years ago, even with (raising) four children, it inspired me," he continued. "It was unfinished business - you know what I mean?"

Immediately after graduating, Vicki Leach got a job with Viking Range Corp., a manufacturer of stainless-steel kitchen appliances headquartered in Greenwood.

Formerly the Viking Range Cooking School manager, she has recently joined such celebrity chefs as Emeril Lagasse, working as a guest chef at the cooking school.

Additionally, she is about to open a bistro, The Oktoc Grill, on University Drive in Starkville.

Relaying his own academic experiences, Robert Leach praised the faculty of MUW.

"Since studying health education at The W, (I've realized) Dr. Joyce Yates is phenomenal over there and Dr. Mark Bean," he said, noting Yates "got (him) involved in" the Mississippi Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, where he serves as research chair-elect.

"If Mississippi is to turn its health fortunes around, we need literally an army of health educators and people like Dr. Yates will be at the helm guiding the army," he added.


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He also noted he was able to obtain his degree, despite his busy schedule, because MUW offered "most courses online."


"It's just a phenomenal program," he said. "The W is to be commended. (Education is) a critical need in Mississippi, and they're fulfilling that need."

"It's a campus-friendly environment," he added, encouraging all students, regardless of age, to pursue their educational goals.

"They've managed to create an environment in which non-traditional students can flourish. It's desperately needed, because a lot are going into these programs."



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