

# **GCC's Monte Carlo Casino Night: A little bit of Las Vegas comes to Culpeper**

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Life itself is a game of chance, says Germanna Community College President David A. Sam.

“And Germanna Community College is about second--and even third — chances,” he says.

A little bit of Las Vegas comes to Culpeper Saturday, April 17, when Germanna Community College's 16th Annual Monte Carlo Casino Night returns to the Joseph R. Daniel Technology Center.

But buying a ticket—or even better, a table—for Monte Carlo Casino Night is no gamble Dr. Sam says. It's more than a roll of the dice. It's a sure thing.

Monte Carlo Casino Night, which features blackjack, craps and slots with points going toward prizes donated by local businesses, is the biggest annual fundraiser for GGP.

Monte Carlo Night is what they would call in Las Vegas “a mortal lock” in terms of helping local students who have financial need and helping to jump-start Culpeper's economy at the same time by making the area's workforce more competitive.

The black tie event has become a highlight of Culpeper's social season while providing scholarship funds for the Germanna Educational Foundation's Germanna Guarantee Program. The program ensures that students with financial need who cannot find enough aid from other sources get the funds necessary to fill in the gaps in paying for tuition and books.

A prime example is Erica Hodge, a 28-year-old Germanna nursing student, who wouldn't be in school this year without the Germanna Guarantee Program. Hodge is a Culpeper resident and 1999 graduate of Spotsylvania High School.

Hodge didn't qualify for other financial aid because her husband made too much money before his hours were cut due to the recession. GGP covers the total cost of her tuition and books.

She's the mother of a 4-year-old son, Trustin, and had been a stay at home mom.

"Fresh out of high school, I was too young to know what I wanted to be. I realized that nursing is what I want to do."

"I have a long term goal of being a holistic nurse practitioner, working with natural medicines. I'd still have the ability to write prescriptions but have the knowledge of alternative medicines."

Hodge believes that vitamins, proper nutrition and exercise can help patients who are now being medicated for some illnesses.

"I believe that God has given us much of the medicines we need from the earth," Hodge said.

Her own experiences with seeking alternative methods of treatment spurred her into this field of study, but she wouldn't be getting her associate's degree in May without the Germanna Guarantee Program.

"I wasn't eligible for any grants or scholarships based on my husband's income level," she said.

That changed because it was all based on tax year 2008. "They didn't factor in that my husband's hours were cut. The Educational Foundation listened to my story... I was shocked, ecstatic and very grateful. It covered everything. That was a huge weight off my shoulders. December had been one of the most stressful months of my life before the very generous gift from the Educational Foundation."

Director of the Germanna Educational Foundation Mike Catell said it's important for the community to support the Guarantee Program because: "Germanna student enrollment continues to increase, and so the mission of the Educational Foundation is more critical than ever. Monte Carlo is the premier fund raising event in support of the Germanna Guarantee Program, which helps to ensure that no student is denied access to pursuing their educational goals at Germanna."