



Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Robert Lawson

Some people are driven to success. Others run and jump towards it, setting records along the way. For Dr. Robert Lawson ('73), it all started with an unintentional challenge from legendary basketball coach Newt Oliver.

"I was a young, brash college student when I met Coach Oliver, and I told him I was going to win the Student Athlete of the Year Award when I was a senior," Lawson said. "Coach Oliver told me, 'Well, son, let's think about that for a moment because only basketball players

are eligible for that award.' I didn't let that bother me, so I went out and set records for the triple jump and long jump. I became the first track and field athlete in school history to win the award."

Dr. Lawson came to Rio from Southwestern High School to pursue a degree in Physical Education, but a conversation with a guidance counselor changed his life.

"She asked what I was gifted at in high school," he said. "I was pretty good in English and Speech, so she suggested I do that. I took that advice, and the rest is history."

Dr. Robert L. Lawson became a highly requested motivational, inspirational, empowerment speaker who has authored 17 books and spent 48 years as a teacher at Gallia Academy High

School, Marshall University, Shawnee State University, Georgetown High School, Chillicothe High School and the Ohio Valley Christian School. During his tenure in education, he developed and taught courses and workshops on leadership training and development, motivational empowerment, diversity and achieving excellence in the classroom for teachers.

Dr. Lawson holds degrees from University of Rio Grande, Marshall University and Nova Southeastern University, but his experiences at Rio Grande created the foundation for his success.

The only way we get somewhere in life is to have a lot of people who will reach out and help along the way," he said. "It's one of the main reasons I went into teaching; I wanted to take something I had a passion for and share it with others. It wasn't just the subject matter I was interested in - that was just a vehicle. What I was interested in was being able to work with and help the entire individual achieve a level of success in life they may have only dreamed about. If I can plant seeds in people's minds to keep focused and moving forward, then I've succeeded. That's been my dream for over 50 years, and I still love it."

Now retired, Dr. Lawson spends his time speaking and writing. He also likes to reflect on his time at Rio Grande.

"Rio Grande was a catalyst for the fire and enthusiasm that lives inside me," he said. "It created a tremendous enthusiasm for life. It was also a fun experience because it provided me with several options. It made me a strong competitor and created a way to believe more in myself. I enjoyed the excitement of being in an environment to exchange ideas and be successful in and outside the classroom. That passion is still with me today."

Are you interested in helping pave the path for the next great Rio alum? Consider giving to [our scholarship fund](#) today!

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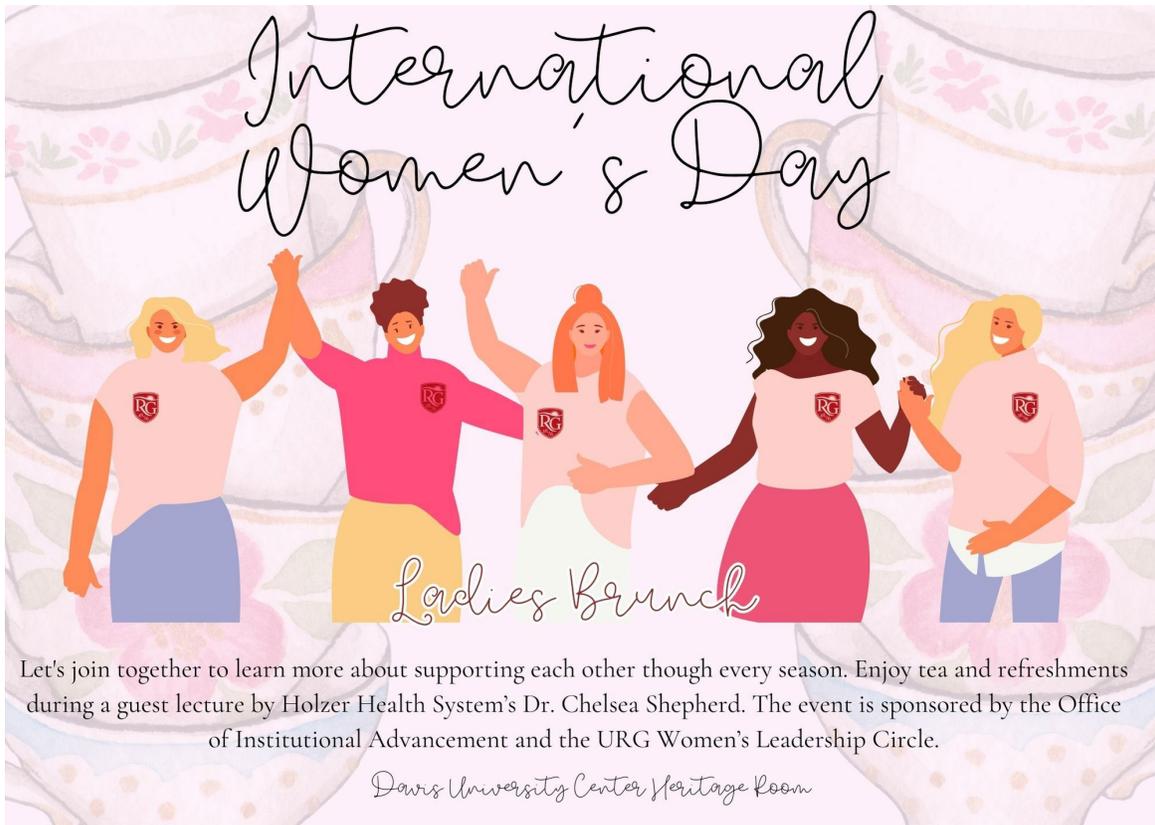


Greek life is an integral part for many Rio grads. Thomas Donnelly '98, Todd Reigle '94 Troy Tripp '93 visited campus to reminisce and discuss reinvigorating a local chapter at main campus. Lunch was enjoyed at Bob Evans and the trio met with President Smith, Annette Ward and other faculty and staff. If you would like to host your alumni chapter on campus this spring or summer, please email us alumni@rio.edu.

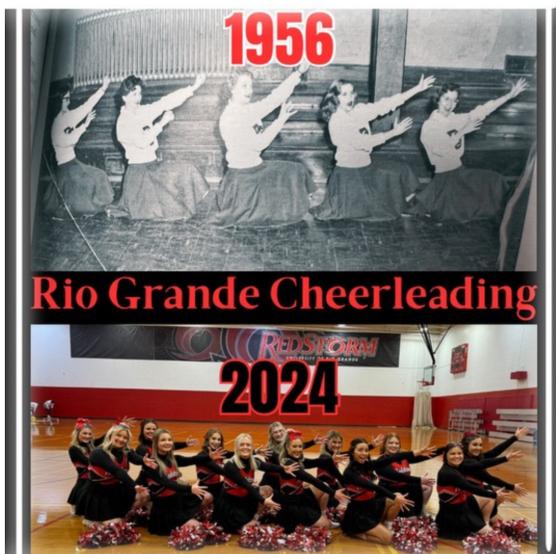




URG Hosted Holzer Health Systems at a basketball game on campus last Thursday. Over 30 [Alumni updated their contact information](#) and several won URG Alumni shirts and other swag! We want to know if you've moved, have a new job, or are celebrating any other milestone. Please consider [updating your contact information!](#) From time to time, we will be sending gifts to those who update their info as a thank-you! President Smith is photographed with Dr. Stewart, CEO of Holzer and Jeff Lanham, Athletic Director after a half time free-throw competition. Showing no mercy, President Smith out-scored Dr. Stewart 7-2! This Saturday, February 3 will be Alumni Day for all URG alumni. Tickets are free for alumni and games will begin at 1:00 PM.



The Office of Institutional Advancement will be partnering with the Office of Student Engagement to host Dr. Chelsea Shepherd of Holzer for a focused chat over brunch to kick off International Women's Day week on campus. Alumni social media (@rioalum) will share history and photos of Rio Alumni throughout the week and the campus will have many student-centered events. If you would like to attend the Ladies' Brunch event, please register to receive email updates. [You can RSVP for event information by following this link. Registration is limited to the first 30 guests.](#)



Cheerleading Then and Now

URG Cheer is back! Head Coach, Dreama Hamid reported that her roster will be over 20 for fall of 2024. The team is hosting open tryouts soon and a signing day event at Lyne Center on the evening of February 29. Be sure to follow along with URG cheer on their Instagram page, @uriocheer. To support student scholarship and cost of additional cheerleading uniforms, visit the [giving page for athletics](#). Your support to any team is greatly appreciated!

Click to Read a recent article highlighting Rio's Wildlife Education Flying Squirrel Research.



RHODES HALL GRAND OPENING



Class of 1974: RSVP to Participate in our Emeritus 50- Year Grad Weekend in May

FEBRUARY 2, 2024
SUBMISSIONS DUE
MARCH 1, 2024
EMAIL GIVING@RIO.EDU

VOTING BEGINS MARCH 4
MURAL WILL BE PAINTED
ON GRADUATION WEEKEND
IN MAY 2024

I ♥ RIO MURAL COMPETITION



Calling All Artists!

It's time for a fun and meaningful competition. The Office of Institutional Advancement is hosting a mural competition fundraiser this spring to raise money for a stage curtain. We are inviting YOU to help us spread the word. We will be accepting submissions during month of February and preliminary voting will begin in March. In April, we will host voting by dollars for THREE FINALISTS. The mural will be installed on campus during the week of graduation. There will be an opportunity for YOU, our alumni to visit campus on a specific day to help paint a section of the selected mural. Think of it as a "community paint by numbers!" Your gifts will help purchase a much-needed new curtain for our beautiful Fine Arts Auditorium. We have opened submissions, and you can read more by clicking the photo and [following the link to our website](#). Good luck to you if you are competing and if not, be sure to follow along on Facebook and Instagram this spring to see the talented creations. We are excited to have a permanent and fun photo backdrop for when you visit campus.

Welsh American Heritage Museum, Oak Hill, OH



St David's Day 2024

Luncheon with the University of Rio
Grande's Grande Chorale

12pm, Saturday, March 2nd, 2024
Oak Hill Presbyterian Church

For more information:
740.245.7186 - welsh@rio.edu - welshmuseum.com



IN YOUR RIO PHOTOS
@RIOALUM



CHANGING TOMORROWS SCHOLARSHIP DINNER



SAVE *the* DATE

THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2024
6:00 PM

Scholarship Fundraising Dinner Set for May

Endowed scholarship donors and current URG scholarship recipients will join area businesses to celebrate the importance of private philanthropic support. Currently, Rio has just over 250 endowed scholarships which are awarded each semester to deserving students. As we enter our 150th year, we will be focusing on growing current scholarship funds and establishing new scholarships to facilitate the rapid growth of both our programs and number of students. Rio has over 85% PELL eligible students and works to keep the value of a URG education affordable. Private scholarships fill the gap for many students so that they can focus on earning an education and eventually a meaningful career. The evening will feature an online auction for those who cannot attend but wish to support the cause. The Grande Chorale will perform on the evening of the event and scholarship recipients will share their impact stories. Guests will enjoy local cuisine, a live auction of special Rio treasures and more. [Check this webpage over the next few months for event information.](#)





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