

Natalie Tennant brings her campaign to Gilmer County and GSC

By David H. Corcoran, Sr.,
Publisher-Editor

While Democratic presidential hopefuls, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, have brought their high octane campaigns to West Virginia this week, one Secretary of State candidate didn't exclude Glenville and Gilmer County from her political itinerary last week. And, she, too, offered some high octane interaction with her local audience.

It didn't take long for Democrat Natalie Tennant, a Marion County native and West Virginia Secretary of State candidate, to connect with Glenville State College and this community. In a Thurs. afternoon, Mar. 13 speech in the College's Presidents Auditorium, she quipped to the mostly younger crowd, "I went to college here before I went to (regular) school."

With a smile on her face, she explained that she was a true "Pioneer" before she was WVU's first female "Mountaineer." That unusual chain of events happened, because she, as a little girl, would often accompany her mother to GSC, where her mom taught at the College's kindergarten.

"I learned a lot about GSC at that time, cheered for them at the games, and was even a train girl for the queen at one Homecoming football games," she added.

Showing much humor, the former Channel 12-TV reporter and news anchor-turned politician used an engaging style of oratory to draw out questions and conversations with the college's audience. She informed them that it's still not too late to register to vote; the deadline is April 21.

This fact led her into the duties of the Secretary of State, West Virginia's chief elections officer, registrar of the state's businesses and sports agents, among other duties. "I want to get more people involved in the political process," she affirmed, "Democracy works better from the ground up."

Continuing, she instructed the young people: "Power is with the people, and the basis of our Democratic system of government is our voting process."

As to Primary Election Day politics, she asked if anyone had ever served as a poll worker? One student responded, "Yes." She stressed that this is one way young people can become involved in politics, serve their state and community, and make some money to boot. Because poll workers are so hard to find in some counties, she recommends that civic clubs might take on that duty as an organizational fund-raiser, contributing their day's wages back to the clubs. "Involving more people in elections is a method of strengthening our democracy," she added.

"Who gives back to their community in West Virginia," she then inquired of the crowd?

Some responded, "Teachers."

Ms. Tennant quickly added, "If you students are a member of the band or a sports team, you are giving back to the community through your entertainment for the public." She went on to enumerate many other professionals and ordinary citizens who give back to this state.

Possibly more student interest was expressed in her tenure as WVU's first lady Mountaineer, for she was a tradition-breaker in that post in the 1980s. "I wanted to be the Mountaineer, because I was spirited and wanted to do public service," she answered, lamenting: "I did get grief from some members of the public, and some even yelled profanity against me, but that's expected when you try to serve the public."

As to the prospect of becoming Secretary of State, she looks forward to bringing a "well-roundedness to the office and looking objectively at the issues." Also, she would work more closely with County Clerks, who are each county's elections' officers.

In the main, she encouraged GSC's students to "be involved" and to bring to the state the college's "perfect example of how people take care of each other and serve others."

Ms. Natalie Tennant, who lost the same race by only 1,100 votes in 2004, will still face stiff competition in the May 13 Democratic Primary, but she says that her dream of service is worth the extra effort.