

STILL INVOLVED

JERIC & NATALIE

“We have a responsibility to help build up SUU and make it look good,” says Jeric Leavitt SUU Alum from 2002. The simplicity of this statement is perhaps overlooked in today’s society where glamour and fame are considered the paragons of success. But, it is in this simplicity that **Jeric and Natalie Leavitt** find so much success and so many reasons to give their time to Southern Utah University.

Jeric and Natalie Leavitt’s story sounds like something out of a Charles Schulz comic strip. A cute little red-headed girl, a reserved boy and a school they both loved. Only this time, it was the little red-headed girl—Natalie—with the head-over-heels crush on the somewhat reserved Jeric.

Natalie became enamored with the “cute boy across the street” when they were living in off-campus housing their freshman year at SUU. Natalie recalls borrowing a vacuum and even taking up rollerblading, all to impress a boy she only hoped she would someday know. No sacrifice was too small for Jeric’s attention, and after a bad fall while rollerblading, Natalie finally felt she had some common ground for a conversation with Jeric.

Though Jeric and Natalie differ in their recollections of their first

meeting—Jeric insists he and Natalie didn’t meet until later, while Natalie swears by her story (even offering as proof a pillowcase where Jeric’s name, misspelled, appears twice)—the result is clear: a beautiful family with three young children, Carter, 5, Eden, 3 and Anna, 7 months.

Their little boy Carter’s face lights up during a break in the interview, when Jeric asks if he wants to play ball. Jeric tries to convince Natalie that a basketball key in the living room would be a perfect addition to their home. Natalie’s look suggests otherwise. She smiles, though, clearly pleased with her family. “I’m a soccer mom and proud,” she says.

While at SUU, Jeric and Natalie were heavily involved in student life. Both were members of Student Government. Jeric was the Student Association Controller, while Natalie was a member of the Student Senate, representing the College of Science. In her academic life, Natalie was extremely involved, even winning an undergraduate research award in 2001 for her study on toads and their migration patterns through the Virgin River. As if everyone thought similarly, Natalie says, “I loved genetics.”

Jeric was a member of the Volleyball Club while at SUU. The team travelled all over the western



states, playing teams like UNLV and the Air Force. During Jeric’s last year, the team competed nationally in Columbus, Ohio, beating schools like Duke University and Texas A&M to be ranked 32nd out of nearly 2,000 schools.

Their involvement with SUU as undergraduates has continued beyond graduation. Jeric currently serves as president of the Las Vegas Alumni Chapter, boasting a size of almost 1400 people. Unfortunately, only about ten are stalwart in attending chapter meetings—but that’s not to suggest that the other chapter members aren’t charitable. Last year, the chapter raised \$14,000 for scholarships. Commenting on the generosity of chapter members, Jeric remarks, “SUU sells itself,” remarks Jeric.

Together, Natalie and Jeric fundraise, recruit and organize events to support the University and help students realize their college potential. Each year, the Chapter has a dinner at the Stratosphere. Last year, 75 people came to hear President Benson and Miss Utah Jill Stevens



speak. The money raised from the event provided scholarships to five students in the Las Vegas area.

Helping students realize their college potential is important to the Leavitt's. "Youth are at a tough age. There is some barrier," says Natalie, pausing, "they can't see their future quite as well." As such, it isn't surprising that Jeric and Natalie make time to help students consider SUU.

When the days seem too long and the effort too much, Natalie remembers a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Written on the front of her organic chemistry textbook, it reads, "That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do; not that the nature of the thing itself is changed, but that our power to do is increased."

Jeric and Natalie Leavitt don't have much more than intrinsic motivation, and the somewhat ordinary qualities of perseverance and dependability suggested by Emerson. But for the Leavitt's, it is the combination of these ordinary qualities that make them such extraordinary individuals.

Above:
The "memories" pillowcase that Natalie saved from her freshman year.



Photos of Jeric and Natalie while they were at SUU.

