Return to the Outback
Steak lunch helps fund athletic scholarships

You can help student athletes in their commitment to sport and study by eating steak for lunch on April 5. Evansville’s popular Outback Steakhouse will open its doors at mid-day for a special event to benefit USI Varsity Club programs and activities.

The club is in the final year of a five-year challenge from USI President H. Ray Hoops to fully fund athletic scholarships. All money raised through membership dues supports scholarships. To date, the Varsity Club has raised approximately $140,000 toward this year’s goal of $175,000.

Jack Marr and Donna Mesker co-chair the Outback lunch this year. Mesker said, “This is a unique fund-raiser for scholarship money. The attendees get to meet the USI athletic coaches who will be waiting on tables. You’ve seen the coaches give orders to the athletes. Now the tables will be turned.”

Lunch tickets ($20 each) may be purchased from the Varsity Club office or any board member. Two seatings are available.

Last year’s lunch attracted more than 350 diners and raised a record $7,655 from ticket sales, tips, and the auction of desserts.

Varsity Club Golf Scramble shoots to raise $25,000 to benefit Athletics

Now is the time to tee it up for the 29th annual USI Varsity Club Golf Scramble. Participants in the event set for June 9 at Helfrich Golf Course in Evansville will be raising money to benefit USI Athletics.

Registration for the Scramble is in progress. The deadline for renewals is May 27. The entry fee includes greens fees, lunch, and a post-tournament banquet.

One of the most successful fund-raising events for the Varsity Club, the Scramble has raised $87,028 since 2001. The money helps the Varsity Club meet scholarship goals for student athletes, provide fifth-year scholarships, and fund special projects.

Mark Altstadt, USI Volunteer of the Year in 2004, returns for the fifth year as Golf Scramble chair.

“Our goal is to surpass $25,000 this year,” Altstadt said. “We have been over the $20,000 mark the last four years. With an extra push, $25,000 is a realistic goal.”

Mark Altstadt, chair of the Golf Scramble for the last four years, and Randa Gatling, USI women’s assistant basketball coach, pick the winning raffle ticket during the 2004 Varsity Club Golf Scramble awards dinner.

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Athletic view

Jon Mark Hall
Director of Athletics

Championship reunion, Women’s Walk up next

First, let me say a big “thank you” to all who volunteered at the NCAA Division II Cross Country Championships, deemed a huge success by student athletes, coaches, and fans. Coaches commented positively on the course, the organization of events, and—most importantly—the hospitality. Under Cindy Bippus’ guidance, volunteers called on teams prior to their arrival in Evansville, greeted them at the airport, and helped organize the student athletes’ championship gifts. Cindy and her volunteers gave this event a special touch that made it stand out as a national championship.

Now we are organizing two more exciting events. The 1995 men’s basketball championship team is invited back to Evansville for a function to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of their accomplishment. We will have this celebration in conjunction with the Varsity Club Golf Scramble.

Also, we will have a Walk for Women’s Athletics in the fall to promote our women’s programs and raise the money we need to take them to the next level. All student athletes on our eight women’s teams and their coaches will participate in the walk, similar to an event we had in the mid-’90s to benefit women’s athletics. Call me at 812/464-1846 to get involved in this important undertaking.

USI campus pulls out all the stops to host NCAA Division II Cross Country Championships

When runners from across the country converged on the USI campus November 20 for the NCAA Division II Cross Country Championships, they and their fans had nothing but compliments for the University’s course and hospitality. The national meet featured 376 runners in the men’s and women’s races.

Cooksey, Rono honored at banquet

Former two-time NCAA Division II Athlete of the Year Elly Rono ’99 was inducted into NCAA Division II Cross Country Coaches Association Hall of Fame at the Hall of Fame Pasta Banquet. Former USI Head Coach Bill Stegemoller presented the award. A six-time All-American, Rono was the 1997 NCAA Division II Cross Country national champion after finishing as the runner-up in 1996. In track and field, he earned national championships in the indoor 5,000 meters and the outdoor 10,000 meters in 1998. Over the last two years, he has posted two top-10 finishes in the Boston Marathon (9th in 2003 and 10th in 2004) and was fourth overall in the 2003 New York Marathon. He lives in Durham, North Carolina.

Volunteers made the difference

(Above) Varsity Club volunteers for the national championship included (from left) Sandy Hatfield, Cindy Bippus, Lloyd and Joanie Jost, Barbara Marr, and Darrell Ragland. (Right) Cindy Bippus, volunteer organizer for the national championship, staffed the information desk with her husband Ray.
Aunt Sophie’s Chicken Soup, a popular dinner event for USI student athletes, will continue each February as a lasting tribute to its creator, Sandi Lawrence.

Lawrence died November 23 after a long illness. She served USI for 16 years in the Student Health Center and Student Wellness program and created Aunt Sophie’s Chicken Soup dinner as a random act of kindness for the USI women’s varsity sports programs in 1998. Since then, the event named for Lawrence’s favorite aunt has become a February tradition, providing a healthy meal to a different USI athletic team each year.

In 2004, Lawrence received the first Volunteer Inspiration Award, an honor established by Volunteer USI, a program of the Office of Alumni and Volunteer Services. Lawrence attended the volunteer recognition banquet with family members in August.

USI vs. UE in baseball in March

For a second straight year, the University of Southern Indiana baseball team will visit the University of Evansville for a game in March. Last spring in front of a standing-room-only crowd of 1,545 persons, the Aces won 18-8 in a game that featured an offensive explosion of 29 hits by both teams. This season’s “Battle at the Braun” will be March 15, with a first pitch at 6 p.m.

USI wants to hear your memories

The University of Southern Indiana celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. You can be a part of the 40th anniversary celebration. In honor of this milestone, we are collecting memories and stories about USI.

Three ways to submit information:

Online: www.usi.edu/1965/survey/
E-mail: anniversary@usi.edu
Mail: USI Alumni Association
50th Anniversary Committee
8600 University Blvd.
Evansville, IN 47712

Stories will be used in USI publications and on the USI Web site.

Annual meeting set

Remember to mark your calendars for the Varsity Club annual meeting on May 19 at a site still to be determined. At this meeting, the members will approve the slate of officers and the Board of Directors for the 2005-06 year. Nominations for board members are due by May 1. For more information, to make a reservation, or to nominate a member for the Board of Directors, contact the Varsity Club office at 812/464-1973.

Basketball teams ready for tournament runs

If it’s March, it must be tournament time for the USI men’s and women’s basketball teams. At press time, the women were battling for a spot in the tournament and the men’s team was ranked in the top 25 of the NCAA.

The GLVC Tournament schedule will change this year with the men tipping off play on March 3 at Roberts Stadium. The women’s teams will begin their part of the tournament on March 4 while the men’s teams take the day off. In future tournaments, the men’s teams will begin play in odd-numbered years and the women’s teams will lead off in even-numbered years.

Game times for the quarterfinals will be noon, 2:30 p.m., 6 p.m., and 8:30 p.m. The semifinals will be March 5 with the men’s teams playing at noon and 2:30 p.m. and the women’s teams at 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. The final will take place March 6. The men’s game will be at 1 p.m. and the women’s game at 3:30 p.m.

The NCAA II Great Lakes Regional will be March 11-14 for the women and March 12-15 for the men. The sites were still to be determined at press time.

Both the men’s and women’s NCAA II Elite Eights are scheduled for March 23-26. The women’s Elite Eight will be at the Hot Springs (Arkansas) Convention Center. The men will play at the Ralph Engelstad Arena in Grand Forks, North Dakota.
Vectren Community Classic packs Roberts Stadium

Roberts Stadium was packed to the rafters when Evansville and Southern Indiana squared off in an exhibition game in November. A sell-out crowd of 12,441 spectators watched the first-ever matchup between the two men's basketball teams. Tied 51-51 with 11:54 to play, the Vectren Community Classic ended with a score of Aces 88-Screaming Eagles 75.

Outside the stadium, more than 1,000 USI fans took part in a tailgate party sponsored by the USI Alumni Association, USI Foundation, Varsity Club, Staff Council, Student Government Association, Activities Programming Board, Lewis Bakeries, Schmucks, and Wesselman’s.

Varsity Club membership

The Varsity Club benefits USI intercollegiate athletics with financial support and fan participation. Five membership levels are available with special benefits at each level.

Silver Eagle ($125)—Admission to Varsity Club Room hospitality events, name on Varsity Club Roster in Physical Activities Center, Eagle Outlook newsletter, invitations to fan trips/special events and All-Sports Picnic, basketball season ticket priority

Golden Eagle ($250)—Above benefits plus invitation to basketball pre-season events

Regal Eagle ($500)—Above benefits plus pregame event at University Home

All-American Eagle ($1,000)—Above benefits plus reserved parking for basketball games, post-season ticket priority

Screaming Eagle ($2,000)—Above benefits plus personal parking place for basketball games


Giving to USI was never easier!
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