

# The Gibson contest

by Wendell Stone

On December 1, 2009, the University of West Georgia's Department of Mass Communications and Theatre Arts sponsored the sixth annual Gibson Public Speaking Contest. The event is named in honor of Dr. Chester Gibson, who served in the department for over two decades, first as a professor and later as the chair.

The first Gibson Contest took place in 2004, with instructor Chris McDowell as host. Since then, both the size of the audience and the

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quality of the competition have consistently increased. This year, over 300 people attended the event.

## The contest

Competition is fierce. Speech faculty select contestants based on the quality and effectiveness of the persuasive speeches delivered in class. Of about 600 students studying public speaking, instructors choose only six or seven to compete. During the contest, judges evaluate speakers' overall content, persuasiveness, use of supporting material, development of a well-reasoned argument, and general delivery.

The three judges for the 2009 contest were Dr. Bruce Lyon, Ms. Jane Simpson, and Mr. Gary Leftwich. Until his recent retirement, Dr. Lyon had served the University of West Georgia in various capacities, most recently as Ombudsman. Ms. Simpson is the university's General Counsel. Mr. Leftwich is Director of Corporate Communications at Southwire, one

of Carroll County's largest employers. He is also an alumnus of the university, having graduated with a degree in Mass Communications.

## The contestants

Each contestant received a cash prize for participating in the event. The first-place winner and recipient of a check for \$400 was **Chelsie Wilson**. Her speech was entitled "The FDA Should Strengthen Regulation on Painkillers." Taking second place and an award of \$300 was **Jessi Burgess** for "Comprehensive Sex Education." **Andrew Struletz** won third place and a prize of \$200 for "Alcohol Should



Chelsie Wilson, first place-winner (photo by Wendell Stone)

be Illegal." Each remaining contestant (**Bernell Grizzard**, **Brenden Jonassaint**, **Daniel Vinson** and **Ferris May**) received a gift card for \$50.

## The sponsors

The speech faculty (Meda Rollings, Gail Reid, Bruce Daniel, Kelly Williams, and Wendell Stone) hosted the event. Awards were made possible through the generous support of The McGraw-Hill Companies and Dr. Chester and Mrs. Faye Gibson.