

Young Progressives founder hits bumps in road to active club

Elizabeth Tobey

The Clackamas Print

"I think that especially in community college, people have work and family and other things to do," said Lisa Nowak, looking up from an empty table that should have held a bubbling Young Progressives meeting.

"Everyone says that the first year is always really difficult with a new club," said Nowak, a horticulture major at Clackamas, who started working to create the Young Progressives club after the November elections.

"I hadn't been involved with politics much before. I attended a Howard Dean rally, got involved a little bit with Democracy for America, and then before the elections I volunteered with the John Kerry campaign."

"After the elections I felt like I needed to do something," she said. "I was thinking that I wished there was a group I could get involved with, so I said 'I guess I should start one.'"

The mission of Young Progressives, as stated on their website, is to promote understanding of the



Shannon Armstead *Clackamas Print*

(From Left) Young Progressives member Shad Downey works with and Lisa Nowak, the founder of the Young Progressives.

American government and encourage young progressive students to vote, educate themselves about current events and become involved in the political process on a local, state and federal level.

"I wanted to create an environment for people to educate themselves, and talk about current issues in politics," said Nowak.

She worked with Associated Student Government to set up a new club and found social science instructor Alan Shackelford to be the advisor. She spent winter break learning how to make the Young Progressives' website and the club had its inaugural meeting in January.

"ASG was really pretty helpful and encouraging," Nowak said. "And

for a while we had four to six regular people [at the meetings]."

Discussion topics have ranged from social security, to politics and religion, the Howard Dean campaign for National Democratic committee chair, the anti-gay sentiment in recent initiatives, the war in general, and Evolution V's intelligent design.

"In the beginning there were several enthusiastic ideas for fundraisers: benefit concerts, selling bumper stickers and t-shirts," she said. "I guess life just got in the way for a lot of people."

Meetings, held every Wednesday from noon to 1 p.m. in the Fireside Lounge, now consists of two loyal members and Nowak.

"I'm a little disenchanted right now," she said, "because I put all this work into it."

Although she will be graduating this spring, Nowak plans to attend Clackamas again in the fall to audit some political science classes. "So," she said, "the opportunity is there to continue Young Progressives."

In the meantime, though, she is getting more involved with Democracy for America, an organization that supports progressive candidates at all lev-

els of government.

She currently runs the Milwaukie meetings that take place the first Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Pogy's in Milwaukie. More information on the Milwaukie Democracy for America is available at <http://dfammeetup.com/712>. General information about the organization can be found at <http://www.democracyforamerica.com>.

"Once I graduate, I want to put more energy into getting people involved [with Young Progressives]," said Nowak.

The experience, though a difficult one, has taught her a lot about running a club.

"I think committing to other tasks with fundraisers and stuff, scared people away," she said. "I guess it's one thing to come up with ideas, and another to make it happen."

"I think if it could really be more of a discussion and support group it would attract more people," Nowak said.

More information on the Young Progressives club is available at www.youngprogressives.com.

Nowak can be contacted at webfoot-1@comcast.net.

Soldier's story from the front lines

Michael McCormack

The Clackamas Print

From February to August of 2003, a 23-year-old Clackamas student put his life on the line as a soldier for America, but more importantly, for the lives and freedoms of the people in Iraq. The following is from an interview with the soldier, called "Johnson" below to preserve anonymity.

"The Iraqis were so scared of Saddam when we got there; they helped us get things we needed to bring down his regime. We established great relationships with the people, and essentially we were there to liberate them," said Johnson.

Johnson and his Marine comrades were the first company into the country. They arrived in Kuwait City during the worst dust storm of the year, and worse yet, they wouldn't have showers built until four weeks later. They established camp in Kuwait, and in the fourth week the war started. The Kuwaiti people offered their help to the soldiers to act as interpreters once they got into Iraq. One Kuwaiti was assigned for each platoon.

The first fight involved the Iraqi's 54th regiment, which was not affiliated with Iraq's Imperial Guard.

"We knew the Iraqis' morale was low, and we were ready to fight," Johnson said.

The U.S. soldiers had 10 minutes until go time, but that time never came. Right when they dismounted from their vehicles to fight, Cobra Marine helicopters flew over the battleground and wiped out the Iraqis.

"A lot of us were glad we hadn't seen any real battle action, but some of us were pissed that there was no trigger time. The higher-ups were hyping us up for battle, but the Cobras were taking it all," Johnson said.

During their voyage through Iraq the worst thing that happened to them so far was a dust storm. At 11 a.m. the sky was a bright orange, and by 1 p.m. it was completely dark.

"That storm lasted four hours, and right after it ended a rain storm hit and we were forced to sleep in the mud," Johnson said.

The morning after the storm, "Good Morning America" was on location with the Marines, but 10 minutes before they were to go on air, a call came in saying that there was a hot area and immediate attention was

needed. The battle lasted four days, and at this time the Kuwaiti interpreters were needed to tell the Iraqi people that any non-military personal needed to leave the city in two hours, because anyone who fired at the American troops would get shot.

After this escapade, the troops set forth into Saddam's City in northeast Baghdad. The first night was hell for the troops; they set up camp in the dark, and little did they know that they were sleeping on a medical dump.

"We couldn't see anything, but the stench was unbearable. There were flies like I have never seen before swarming all around us," Johnson said. "We woke up the next morning and there were needles, medical supplies and body parts right where we had slept; we all began to get sick."

When the troops went into the city they had a huge firefight, and the civilians, carrying white flags and chanting "Bush No. 1," were out watching the fight happen.

Later that night the troops camped next to a river and were ambushed from across the way by the Imperial Guard, who were in a warehouse. This battle didn't last very long, with the Marines blowing up the warehouse, leaving only one Iraqi soldier alive. But the next day was going to be an interesting one for the troops.

"We went into Baghdad the next morning with three trucks, three tanks and 35 men," Johnson said. "We got hit like crazy from all angles; that city is like a maze, but we were able to hold them off."

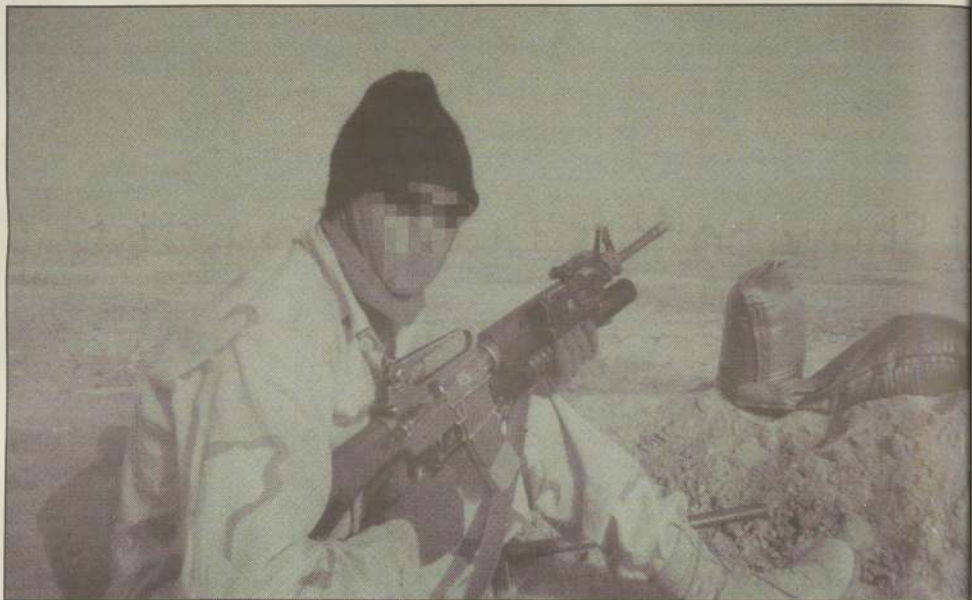
On that day, Johnson and his comrades were awarded a Presidential Citation Award; the first platoon to do so since Somalia in 1993.

The company had one more firefight in Baghdad before leaving the city for good. Their next stop would be in a city named Rumaytha.

While in this city, no big fire-fights took place, but the U.S. troops developed good relations with the Rumaytha civilians. Johnson said that between 70 and 80 percent of Iraqi people love Americans and George W. Bush.

"We needed to be there for the people; Americans need to realize that Saddam had guns in schools. The place is just so fearful for the people, especially the women and children," Johnson said.

Johnson wants the war to end, he said, but not until we can ensure that the children, the future of that country, get the better life that they deserve.



Contributed photo

Twenty-three-year-old Clackamas student and Marine, "Johnson," served his country by going to Iraq as a soldier from February to August of 2003.

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