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Students review the course syllabus for Nancy Berger's college composition class on Tuesday September 9, 2008 at Beacon College in Leesburg.



disability; dysgraphia, a writing disorder resulting in illegibility; and dyspraxia, problems with motor coordination are a few disabilities students at Beacon combat everyday.

A learning disability is a neurological disorder that can't be cured or fixed; it's a lifelong issue. A disorder can impede a student while listening, thinking, reading, writing, spelling or performing mathematical calculations.

Students employ coping strategies to hurdle those impediments.

Marvin's was diagnosed with ADHD in his early childhood. Students with ADHD tend to daydream and miss parts of conversations.

Teachers often scolded Marvin for drawing at his desk. Drawing was an outlet for Marvin and sometimes helped him pay more attention -- some of his pictures followed themes discussed by teachers in class.

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More Students Finding Beacon

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When Andrew Marvin attended the University of South Florida, advisors directed him to a sign language specialist for his learning disability. Marvin, 22, isn't deaf or hard of hearing. He has attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD.

"The sign language specialist was the only one available," said Marvin. "(School officials) weren't ready, they weren't prepared.

"You kind of get the message that this school isn't for you."

After unsuccessful attempts at USF and Keiser University in Sarasota, Marvin enrolled in a school with a mission to prepare students with learning disabilities for graduate school or the workforce.

Marvin is part of a growing number of students at Leesburg's Beacon College earning associates and bachelor's degrees in human services, liberal studies, and computer information technology.

Student enrollment at Beacon has climbed to a record 124 students this year, a 6 percent increase from last year; the student population at Beacon has nearly doubled in the past 5 years.

"We have a much stronger recognition, which is helping with recruitment," Beacon College President Deborah Brodbeck said. There are few programs at the college level throughout the country for students with learning disabilities, she added.

Beacon's faculty attend national conferences to tout the school's education support services and academic mentoring program. The reaffirmation of the school's accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools gives stability to its programs, Brodbeck said.

The college could encounter an influx of eager students as Beacon gains more recognition and learning disability diagnoses become more prevalent. Brodbeck said the college is expecting to double in size in the next five years. The college is already looking into expanding its campus, she said.

The school is giving students with learning disabilities -- who may have been marginalized in other educational settings -- an opportunity to get an education they never thought was possible, Brodbeck said.

Each disability is different, and with the right help, can be overcome. Dyslexia, a language and reading