

Tennant Visits Convention



Natalie Tennant

By **RON GREGORY**
Staff Writer

HAMLIN – One of the statewide candidates who visited Lincoln County as part of the 2008 Democrat Convention is the first – and to date, only – female to serve as West Virginia University's Mountaineer mascot.

Secretary of State candidate Natalie Tennant told a Lincoln County audience that she is a "farm girl from Marion County." She said her roots go deep in the Mountain State, as a seventh generation West Virginian.

"I know the value of hard work and persistence," Tennant told the crowd. She noted that, "Four years ago, I ran for secretary of state and I lost. But I lost with dignity and respect for the system. I congratulated the winner and I set my goal to run again."

Tennant continued, "I am just so grateful to live in a place where I, a farm girl from Ann's Run, Fairview, West Virginia, can just run for secretary of state when I decide to. It is a great privilege to be here today and to be campaigning again for secretary of state of West Virginia."

Tennant told those in attendance that she has a campaign headquarters at 180 Summers Street in Charleston. The telephone number there is 347-0059 or 347-0069, she said.

Both of Tennant's parents and four of her brothers and sisters are teachers. So, education has been a "big thing" to Tennant since her youth, she said. At WVU, she majored in education as well.

"But the love of telling stories, especially positive ones about the people and places of West Virginia soon turned my attention to journalism," Tennant said.

She graduated in 1991 with a degree in journalism and went on to become a well-known anchor and reporter in both the Clarksburg and Charleston areas. She also spent a summer in London as an intern working for ABC news. Her feature stories on the West Virginia stations won awards and focused on the positive stories of real-life West Virginians, she said.

Tennant said she wants to bring openness and objectivity to the secretary of state's office. She mentioned an incident last fall that she casts a negative reflection on the current secretary of state's operation. She said the secretary of state's office mailed postcards that contained "unfair and inaccurate information." Tennant said the mailing's errors could have been avoided if the current secretary of state, Republican Betty Ireland, "had simply consulted with the state's county clerks, as I would have."

Tennant said she feels the secretary of state's office recently has shown a "lack of respect" for county officials. That will be corrected if she is elected, she added.

In conclusion, Tennant thanked "my mentor, State Treasurer John Perdue."

Tennant said that when she lost the secretary of state election in 2004, Perdue offered her a job in the state treasurer's office. "That gave me an opportunity to serve the people, as I had wanted to do when I ran for secretary of state," said Tennant. "I owe a great deal to John Perdue. He has guided and counseled me and I am a better person because of the time I spent working for and with him." Tennant and her husband, State Senator Erik Wells of Kanawha County's Eighth District, were married on West Virginia Day, June 20, 1998. The couple has one daughter, Delaney, who is nearly six years old.

Erik and Tennant own Wells Media Group, LLC, a small business that focuses on media training and video production. Tennant said she enjoyed coming to Lincoln County.

"I saw a lot of my signs in yards along the way," said Tennant. "I hope I will have the support of Lincoln Countians on May 13."